THE EDITORS: HOW DEMOCRATS FLUNKED THE MIDTERMS

Looking Beyond Race
Jonetta Rose Barras

THE NEW DEMOCRAT

BLUEPRINT

IDEAS FOR A NEW CENTURY

How Bush changed the tone in Washington... for the worse!

by Joshua Green

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2002 • $5.00
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Partisan Ploys

If there were any doubts about President George W. Bush's tendencies as a political partisan, one need look no farther than the closing days of Election 2002, when the full force of the presidency was on display to put GOP candidates over the top.

This partisan road warrior inhabits the same body as the candidate who promised to change the tone in Washington and the wartime president who seeks bipartisan support.

In our cover story, Joshua Green takes an in-depth look at the partisan presidency and its architect, White House political guru Karl Rove. "Putting Politics First: The Triumph of Rovery" details such nakedly partisan policies as last year's steel tariffs, which were targeted at voters in major industrial states such as Pennsylvania and Michigan.

The fact that the steel gambit didn't work very well—Democrats were elected governor in both Pennsylvania and Michigan—is reflected in DLC Policy Director Ed Kilgore's article on how well Democrats did in state elections around the country. Part of the reason, argues trade specialist Ed Gresser in his article on the steel tariffs, is that bad policy—tariffs are simply another tax on the economy—often translates into poor politics.

And while the election results were a sobering moment for Democrats, the party can use them as the starting point to restore its sense of national purpose by once again seizing the mantle of reform and big ideas, Al From writes in his column. The time and place for that is in the Idea Primary of 2003, which will set the party's agenda for 2004. "All Democrats have to do," writes DLC President Bruce Reed, "is let the country know how much they can get done, instead of how much they'll stop."

If they do that, the wilderness years can be brief.

—Peter Ross Range

In Memoriam

BLUEPRINT and the Democratic Leadership Council note with sadness the passing of one of our original and most committed advisory board members, Tom Ross, who died on Oct. 24, 2002. Tom was an executive at Loral Space and Communications, Ltd., where he worked closely with our board chair, Bernard L. Schwartz. But before his years at Loral, Tom had already had a distinguished career in public relations, government, and journalism. He co-authored best-selling books on U.S. intelligence ("The U-2 Affair," "The Invisible Government") and served as a defense department spokesman, 1977-1981. Tom's counsel and encouragement were solid and timely, and they will be missed.

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Next time:

Say Something!

After a brain-dead midterm, the Idea Primary can't start soon enough.

by **The Editors**

The 2002 elections were not a complete Democratic meltdown. At the state level, Democrats managed to pick up three governorships. And at the national level, the disappointing results may have had as much to do with George W. Bush's persistent popularity in times of war as with Democrats' colossal failure to make the election about anything.

But the lessons that should be learned are clear and dramatic enough. The party's present message is uninspiring to Democrats and unconvincing to independents and other swing voters. It does not deal at all with the two overriding issues facing the American people: the war on terrorism and a deteriorating economy. Centered almost obsessively on demanding as much money as possible for a Medicare prescription drug benefit, while rejecting any change in Social Security, the congressional Democratic agenda leaves its intended beneficiaries cold—as evidenced by an estimated double-digit Republican margin among senior citizens. It also leaves *most* Americans—those under 65—out in the cold.

Ironically, since the prescription drug-Social Security rap has for years been the preferred silver bullet of Democratic consultants, "populists," and traditional liberals, this micromessage made it breathtakingly easy for Republicans to blur partisan distinctions by simply saying, "Me, too." And by taking a pass on national security issues at a time when most Americans continue to feel insecure, Democrats also made it easy for Republicans to turn the election into a call for support for a popular commander-in-chief.

But the war on terrorism and the declining economy were not the only issues ignored by most Democratic candidates. They also had little to say, at least in their paid advertising, about homeland security, the renewed increases in violent crime, the continued crisis in K-12 education, the squandering of budget surpluses, the reversal of progress against poverty, our deplorable dependence on oil, the growing evidence of global climate change, the transportation gridlock in our metropolitan areas, or the return of spiraling healthcare costs (other than talking about prescription drugs). And despite all the talk about today's retirees, virtually no candidates dared address the impending retirement of the baby boom generation. Republicans were potentially vulnerable on almost all of these issues.

In other words, congressional Democrats abandoned most of the issue landscape and clung to a narrow message that not only failed to appeal to its target audience, but reinforced Republican claims that Democrats were addicted to the expansion of government programs, subservient to special interest groups, untrustworthy on defense and foreign affairs, and opposed instinctively to reforms. Viewed in that light, it's no surprise Democrats failed to make gains in Congress.

It's important to understand, mechanically, how Democrats fell short in this election, in part because the absence of exit polling this year has created something of a fact-free national spin room in which all sorts of pernicious nonsense is being offered.

Democrats did not lose because they failed to energize the Democratic base with a sufficiently left-bent or anti-GOP campaign. In states like Georgia, South Carolina, and Maryland, for example, African-American turnout remained or exceeded the historic levels achieved in 1998. And in Minnesota and Florida, two states where the Democratic base was hyper-excited, Republicans won decisive, even humiliating wins. It's an old lesson from the 1980s that apparently has to be learned all over again: Base-mobilization strategies, especially those that depend on negative campaigning, often backfire on Democrats because they also energize the Republican base, which happens to be bigger. At a time when there are three self-described conservatives for every two liberals, with moderates outnumbering the two combined, abandoning the center is more perilous than ever.

The real GOTV failure for Democrats was with independent voters, who have been trending Democratic for nearly a decade, but who appear to have stayed home or trended Republican this year, in part thanks to negative campaigning and a brain-dead Democratic message.

Democrats did not lose, moreover, because they were

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divided on Iraq or taxes—except insofar as the divisions led many Democrats to refuse to talk about foreign policy or tax policy at all.

To be sure, there were Democratic accomodationists who thought that simply supporting the president on either or both subjects would neutralize these issues and make it possible to place the full weight of their campaigns on the slender reed of prescription drugs and Social Security. For the most part, they lost.

But so, too, did Democrats who went the opposite way, including loud-and-proud Iraq doves like former Vice President Mondale. Even those Democrats who are agitating the air for a more confrontational Democratic message cannot really claim that opposing the use-of-force resolution or calling for a rollback of tax cuts would have saved senators like Max Cleland of Georgia or Jean Carnahan of Missouri.

The signals for how Democrats can come back are all pointed in the same direction: They need a comprehensive agenda based on values and broad policy goals that Republicans cannot pretend to accept, but that most voters do accept.

On *national security policy*, instead of simply reacting to administration policies, Democrats should lay out a vision for U.S. leadership in a dangerous world. While Republicans talk about the "right of preemption" and the "axis of evil," and spurn international cooperation whenever they can, Democrats can talk about a strategy that promotes American values of economic and political freedom through multilateral institutions and alliances, and a long-range strategy for building democratic institutions and prosperity in regions like the Islamic Middle East.

On *economic policy*, instead of simply blaming the Bush administration or Republicans for negative economic trends, Democrats should promote an immediate jolt to a dangerously struggling economy while addressing some of our most pressing long-term national problems. While Republicans talk about more tax cuts for the wealthy as their sole strategy for economic stimulus, Democrats should talk about a big investment in transportation infrastructure to break down metropolitan gridlock; an Apollo Project to accelerate the development of alternative fuels and cleaner car technologies; a jump-start to make high-speed Internet service virtually universal; and help for working families struggling to get or keep health insurance.

On *tax policy*, instead of simply taking positions for or against the 2001 Bush tax cuts, Democrats should talk about their common commitment to a progressive tax system that places the largest burden on those with the greatest wealth. While Republicans talk about simplifying the tax code by eliminating taxes on the wealthy or getting rid of progressive rates, Democrats can talk about simplifying taxes without "flattening" rates; and endorse tax cuts that truly enhance growth and reduce the burden on low-to-middle income families.

On *homeland security policy*, instead of fighting an insider battle over the staffing of a new federal department, Democrats should take the lead in calling for a fundamental reform of our intelligence agencies and immediate aid to our front-line law enforcement agencies to protect Americans from terrorist threats. While Republicans call for gutting aid to police departments to pay for a homeland security department, Democrats should argue that we need more resources and better technologies on the ground to fight both crime and terrorism.

On *social policy*, instead of simply deriding "compassionate conservatism," Democrats should finally articulate a progressive family policy. While Republicans talk about giving working families crumbs from upper-class tax cuts, Democrats can talk about aggressive support for telecommuting, paid family and medical leave, and initiatives to complete the welfare-to-work revolution.

And on *civic policy*, instead of competing with the GOP to encourage Americans to view public policy from a selfish point of view, Democrats should aggressively promote an agenda of robust citizenship and political reform. While Republicans relentlessly champion individual self-interest, vicarious sacrifice through the armed services, and money-dominated elections, Democrats can talk about a politics of higher moral purpose, encompassing universal voluntary national service, an ethic of community, opposition to corporate welfare, and voluntary public financing of political campaigns supplemented by free broadcast time.

BLUEPRINT's cover package on **Politics 2002** begins on page 14.

Democrats from every ideological background could support this kind of broad message. But the challenge is to find Democratic messengers who can deliver it. The congressional wing of the party, whose vision is fatally constricted by a variety of distortions ranging from House and Senate procedures to noncompetitive districts to interest group influence, isn't likely to supply the right message for change.

Politics will now focus on a 2004 presidential election in which candidates must move beyond the narrow and unsuccessful congressional agenda, and reach wider and higher for a message that is compelling to a majority of the American people, "base" and "swing" alike. In 2003, Democrats are poised to conduct an intense primary of ideas that will not only flush out the best candidates, but put the party back at the forefront of innovative answers to America's challenges.

Democrats need a new message, and will soon have a new messenger. They cannot come too soon. ◆

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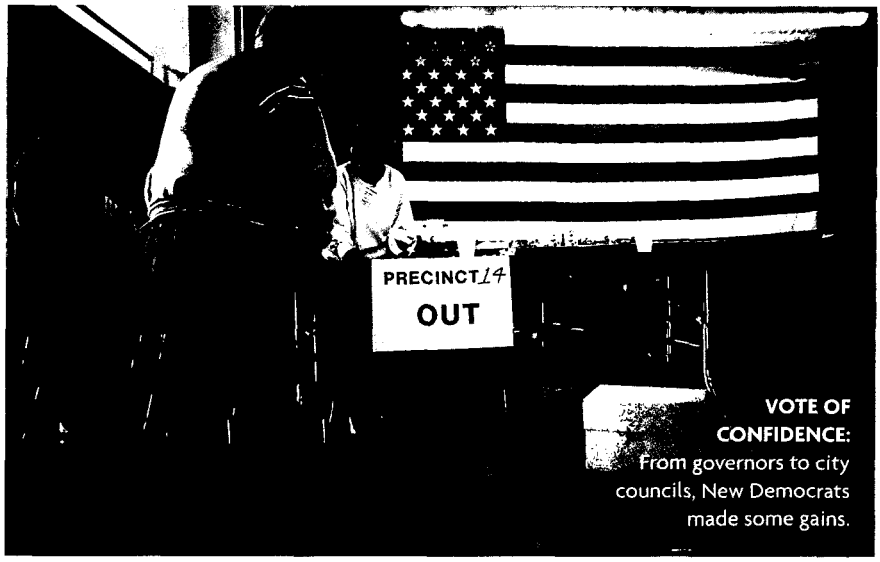
New Dems in the winner's circle

There's fresh talent in state and local offices around the country.

You might not have known it from the headlines after the elections, but Democrats—and New Democrats in particular—had quite a few success stories at the state and local levels.

Democrats picked up a net gain of three governorships. This was thanks in large part to victories by long-time New Democrats Jennifer Granholm of Michigan, Kathleen Sebelius of Kansas, Bill Richardson of New Mexico, Ed Rendell of Pennsylvania, and Janet Napolitano of Arizona, all of whom swung their state executive mansions from "red" to "blue." Incumbent New Democrat governors who held their offices include California Gov. Gray Davis and Iowa Gov. Tom Vilsack.



VOTE OF CONFIDENCE: From governors to city councils, New Democrats made some gains.

Among statewide elected officials, it's important to note that several New Democrats bucked the Republican tide in Georgia. They include Mark Taylor (lieutenant governor), Cathy Cox (secretary of state), and Michael Thurmond (labor commissioner). Other statewide elected officials close to the DLC who won contested races include New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, Delaware State Treasurer Jack Markell, Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller, Colorado Attorney General Ken Salazar, California Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante, and California State Treasurer Phil Angelides.

extras New Democrats Online NDOL.org Search: Extra 2002 Election

Seven members of the DLC's State Legislative Advisory Board moved up from state representative to state senator: Ken Cheuvront (Ariz.), Dean Florez (Calif.), Gabrielle Giffords (Ariz.), Dan Grossman (Colo.), Gilda Jacobs (Mich.), Aaron Reardon (Wash.), and Jeff Schoenberg (Ill.).

Relatively few municipal and county elections were held this year, but New Democrat Anthony Williams was re-elected mayor of Washington, D.C., and Jerry Abramson was elected mayor of Louisville, Ky. Also winning re-election were Montgomery County (Md.) Executive Doug Duncan and San Francisco Supervisor Gavin Newsom—both members of the executive committee of the DLC's Local Elected Officials Network.

While the bad news on the Congressional level was undeniable in 2002, New Democrats continue to bring a fresh infusion of new talent into state and local governments around the country. ◆

PLAYbook

A menu of ideas for state and local elected officials.

"Earn & Learn"

New Dem Play || Promoting career advancement for people getting off welfare

Where It's Working || Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Florida

Players || Governors, state legislators, and county officials

The major federal welfare reform legislation of the 1980s—the JOBS program—was notably unsuccessful in helping welfare recipients achieve independence from public assistance, in no small part because it made perpetual enrollment in education and training programs a preferred alternative to immediate, actual work.

Replacing that "education first" model with "work first" was one of the most important developments in the welfare reform debate of the 1990s.

But work-first advocates have always acknowledged that continued education and training are essential to help workforce entrants climb the career ladder, once they have gotten onto the ladder in the first place. In many parts of the country, "earn and learn" initiatives have been developed to help facilitate that process.

Read more on NDOL.org. Click "State & Local Playbook" and then click "Earn & Learn."

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A [illegible] with...

Doug Duncan >> on the sniper shootings and homeland security

October's harrowing string of sniper shootings in the Washington, D.C. region began in Montgomery County, Md., where six people were killed (four others died elsewhere). Leading the effort to catch the suspects, County Executive Douglas Duncan and his police chief, Charles Moose, helped put together a multi-jurisdictional, multi-agency task force that offered lessons for future emergencies.

BP > How did you get through it?

DD: A lot of prayer, a lot of tears. Who would have thought that somebody would go around shooting humans, and just terrorize a whole community?

The low point for me was that Tuesday when the bus driver was shot, one of our own employees, and they released that language—"your kids are not safe anywhere."

BP > How did it compare to Sept. 11?

DD: We went through anxiety on Sept. 11. We were directly impacted. We had firefighters at the Pentagon. Sept. 11 was an attack and then it was over. But the sniper murders just kept coming.

In some ways, it was like the suicide bombers in Israel, or the bombings they had in London by the IRA. You could be shot walking home down the street. You could be shot in front of a store in your neighborhood, or on your way to the mall. We kept saying, "These are acts of terror." It was a homeland security thing.

BP > How well did the federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies communicate?

DD: It really impressed me. We started with the Montgomery County Police, the Maryland State Police, and then we had all the sheriffs' offices. The FBI was there right away. The ATF, Secret Service, U.S. Marshals. The coordination and the response of all these different law enforcement agencies was immediate.

After Sept. 11, there's a shared sense of responsibility, shared obligation. If anyone's under attack, we're all under attack.

BP > What were the most important tools you had in your bag?

DD: The technology. If we were left to the old ways, how would you make sense of anything? You've got tens of thousands of pieces of information. You plug all this information into databases and it's a way to meld knowledge very quickly so that you can direct the investigation.

LEADERSHIP UNDER FIRE: Duncan and Moose communicated clearly with the public—and with their counterparts in a multi-jurisdictional task force.

But to manage something like this you have to convey to the public what you're doing. You can't tell them the details. But you can tell them you're doing something. You're making progress.

BP > So there's a political challenge...

DD: Of holding the community together, so you don't become paralyzed. If that happens, all of a sudden, the anger that is directed toward the shooter, or shooters, is now displaced toward the police and the government.

You need to bring people together and set a course of action. I thought it was critical in terms of managing the public's fears to be able to say, "We're speaking with one voice. We're one team with one mission." And just keep hammering that home. It made a huge difference in getting the public to participate in the investigation.

BP > Political leadership must have been tough with so many different agencies involved.

DD: You had to hold a lot of people's hands. The other thing was keeping politicians away. We had one in particular who just kept trying to federalize this, kept trying to step in, to show she was in charge—the Congresswoman from the 8th District. She [was] in a tight race for re-election.

I think the contrast between the investigative task force and the prosecutors is just striking to me. You've got a state's attorney here who's walking around the courthouse, saying, "This is my career-maker."

BP > To what extent will the lessons learned from Sept. 11 and the sniper shootings help fight crime in general?

DD: There's a real connection. Everything that we're doing in response to Sept. 11 is to beef up our response capabilities. The quicker you can respond, the more you can contain whatever the damage is.

BP > What do local authorities need from the federal government?

DD: The money needs to start flowing to the right places. It needs to go directly to the first responders—police departments and fire departments across the country. We need to equip them. That's been our message to the federal government, and they have not heard it. Bush has not responded well to that at all. ◆

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Jim Davis, Ron Kind, and Adam Smith

Leading the House New Democrat Coalition into the 108th Congress.

The three co-chairs of the New Democrat Coalition—the largest organized caucus in the U.S. House of Representatives—face a tough challenge in the 108th Congress, just as they did in the 107th. These two sessions are the first since the NDC's formation in 1997 in which the 70-plus-member group has had to shape the political center without the benefit of a Clinton White House to counter the GOP's worst impulses.

"President Bush has certainly tended to push policy debates to the right," said Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.), who took over the three-way NDC co-chairmanship in April 2002 with colleagues Jim Davis (D-Fla.) and Ron Kind (D-Wis.), succeeding the group's founders, Cal Dooley (D-Calif.), Jim Moran (D-Va.) and Tim Roemer (D-Ind.).

But even with a Republican administration, the NDC continues to hold significant leverage in a House almost evenly divided. Its members represent swing districts around the country. As a group, they are the voice of independent-minded America. And if Republicans want to get anything done, they have to move far enough to the center to attract at least some NDC votes.

extras
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In the last Congress, the NDC achieved policy victories on a number of important fronts.

Notably, its members helped design the framework for sweeping education reform legislation that set high standards for student achievement in public schools. The bill also provided more resources for schools to meet those standards and demanded accountability for results.

"Those new reforms will significantly streamline the federal bureaucracy, and provide resources and incentives for innovation," said Kind, a member of the House Education and Workforce Committee, who was able to play an influential role in shaping the final outcome.

Working with colleagues in the Senate, House NDC members also provided key swing votes to pass the long-sought Trade Promotion Authority bill, which set an aggressive agenda for opening foreign markets to American goods and services. NDC members helped guide the debate to ensure that the bill fundamentally improved assistance for workers displaced by trade competition.

In the 108th Congress, the three co-chairs will lead their caucus in the struggle to restore fiscal discipline to the budget process, so the country can both fight terrorism and grow the economy.

"We believe everything must be on the table for this discussion," they wrote in August, "including provisions of the tax cut passed into law last year but not yet enacted, corporate tax loopholes that allow businesses to evade taxes by incorporating overseas, and spending programs."

Moran has described Davis, Kind, and Smith as "three of the best and brightest members of Congress." Each has the studiousness of a policy wonk and the skills of a political tactician. Together, they are becoming a cohesive unit, sharing the NDC's leadership responsibilities. Davis acts as the group's liaison to the Democratic Party leadership. Kind handles the relationships with political fundraising groups like the New Democrat Network and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. And Smith serves as the group's liaison to the Democratic Leadership Council. ◆

REP. JIM DAVIS: Florida, 11th District

REP. RON KIND: Wisconsin, Third District

REP. ADAM SMITH: Washington, Ninth District

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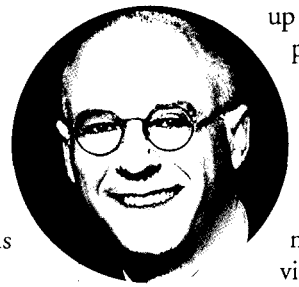
Robert Butkin

State-operated college savings programs—known as 529 plans—are an increasingly popular way to squirrel away money for tuition. But not all are alike. Their fees, restrictions, and returns vary widely from state to state.

Oklahoma's plan has been one of the highest rated in the country under the leadership of State Treasurer Robert Butkin. It was one of only nine to earn an "A" in a *USA Today* analysis of 43 plans' overall operations and investment performance.

"We intentionally designed the program to be flexible," said Butkin. Unlike some state plans, which require 529 funds to be used in-state, the Oklahoma Savings Plan gives students more freedom. They may use the money in-state or out-of-state, for a private or public university, in a two-year or four-year college, or for post-secondary vocational instruction. "It is entirely up to the child and his parents to make the choice [that] is best for them," said Butkin.



State Treasurer Robert Butkin
Oklahoma

The plan allows anyone to chip in, not just family. Individuals can automatically deduct as little as $15 from their paychecks or bank accounts to contribute to a 529 savings plan, and they can claim $2,500 per year in state tax deductions. That incentive helped double the number of participants in the Oklahoma plan in eight months.

An account can be opened with as little as $25, and there are no contribution limits until the fund has earned $235,000. The point, said Butkin, is "to make the American Dream come alive for everyone." ◆

Daphna Edwards Ziman

Children's advocate Daphna Ziman believes the foster care system has its priorities backwards: It rewards itself with more federal and state money as it pushes "problem children" up the institutional ladder from foster families to residential treatment centers for "troubled" youth.

She argues the incentives should be reversed: Foster programs should be rewarded for the progress children make, not their deterioration.

"It's a billion dollar business," says Ziman, founder and chair of the non-partisan, California-based organization Children Uniting Nations. The system's current structure practically encourages underachievement, she says, reinforcing the stigma of the foster child as "incorrigible."

Daphna Edwards Ziman
Children's Advocate

Ziman, a foster parent herself, is a vocal proponent of mentoring programs that break that dysfunctional cycle by helping children succeed both academically and socially.

She has championed an innovative model that insists on rigorous training for mentors, providing them the skills to develop productive relationships with foster children. The model requires mentors to make extended commitments to the children, and it depends heavily on building networks between public entities and the corporate community to recruit volunteers.

Started in Los Angeles, Ziman hopes to see the approach go national. Legislation introduced in the U.S. Senate by Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-La.), with co-sponsors Evan Bayh (D-Ind.) and John Kerry (D-Mass.) could help achieve that goal. It would authorize $19 million a year for public-private partnerships to provide mentoring for foster children.

Research shows 45 percent of mentored teens are less likely to use drugs, and 49 percent have better academic performance. ◆

Eric Reeves

The typical shopping list of a local government may include rock salt for icy roads, chalk for teachers, and paper for office copiers. But stocking up on even such simple necessities has traditionally required an arduous procurement process—with requests for proposals, bids, and mounds of paper work.

Now, thanks to North Carolina State Sen. Eric Reeves, local governments in his state have a better way.

A new law authored by Reeves allows cities, school boards, and other local authorities to dramatically increase efficiency using electronic bidding and procurement. Under the law, local governments may now hold "reverse auctions" based on the model pioneered by Priceline.com, which allows buyers to name the prices they'd like to pay and lets sellers scramble to offer the best deals they can.

State Sen. Eric Reeves
North Carolina

Reeves believes the administrative cost savings from this model will be substantial. "If utilized fully," he contends, "e-procurement in [information technology] alone could save the state 40 percent. In tough budget times such as these, that money can be better used to reduce class size in our schools, and to help seniors pay for prescription drugs."

The law does not prescribe a one-size-fits-all solution. Local governments may customize electronic bidding systems to suit their needs—or use a combination of electronic and paper bidding.

Reeves does not see the new law as an end in itself, but rather one step toward fully harnessing the power of new technologies to make governments more efficient and effective.

"E-government," he says, "has the potential to truly reform government to make it more nimble so that it can react to our needs." ◆

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The Ideas That Conquered the World: Peace, Democracy, and Free Markets in the Twenty-first Century || *by Michael Mandelbaum* • Public Affairs • 496 pp. • $30.00

Despite war clouds over Iraq, a resurgent al Qaeda, a nuclear North Korea, and uncooperative allies, political scientist Michael Mandelbaum still believes the good news vastly outweighs the bad.

Thumbing his nose at conventional wisdom, he argues that Sept. 11 did not shake the Western world's foundations. In fact, it strengthened our faith in the pillars of liberal democracy, capitalism, and peaceful relations among states, because militant Islamists and rogue regimes do not offer an alternative ideology with any real drawing power.

The story of the triumph of democracy and free markets has been told before, notably by Francis Fukuyama. But Mandelbaum breaks new ground by arguing there has been a "dramatic devaluation of war" among the great powers, who now see it as a last resort.

At a time when conflict rages or looms in many places around the world, this may seem absurd. But Mandelbaum takes the long view, pointing to the example of the European Union. Its members are liberal democracies that reject power politics in favor of what he calls "common security": military transparency with clearly defensive configurations.

Political scientists have long theorized about mutually reinforcing connections between capitalism and democracy. Mandelbaum posits a further connection: Prosperous democracies will begin to adopt common security. He sees serious threats in a recalcitrant Russia or China, global warming, and nuclear proliferation. But he remains optimistic that, like democracy and free markets, peace will spread from the world's core to the periphery. ◆

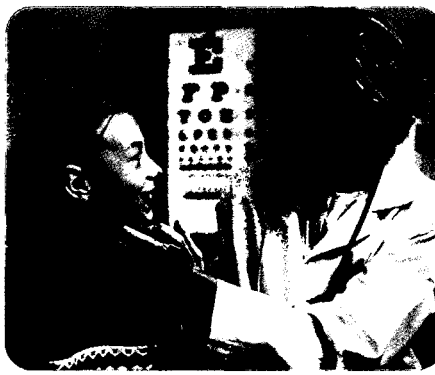
Where to get it: www.publicaffairsbooks.com and major online booksellers.

—Kevin Croke

Every Friday on NDOL.org

Idea of the Week

Pay-for-perfomance in health care



One of the surprising peculiarities of health care is that doctors are not paid more for delivering higher quality care. In fact, doctors who are good at preventing trips to the hospital for their patients with chronic conditions like diabetes and asthma may actually *lose* money because they don't end up billing for as many procedures.

The National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine (IOM) recently released a study proposing that the federal government use its enormous purchasing power in health care to end that absurd disincentive by linking payments to performance.

The principle of pay-for-performance closely links cost to quality. It means giving higher reimbursements to physicians and hospitals that deliver higher quality care according to clinically proven guidelines and performance measurements.

Earlier this year, six of the largest health plans in California formed a consortium called the Integrated Healthcare Association. In conjunction with consumer and medical profession representatives, the association developed performance measures that would reward providers for patient satisfaction, prevention, chronic care management, and investment in information technology. Data on these measures are set to be collected next year and will be used to pay financial bonuses the following year.

Since one-third of all Americans are served by federal health care programs—including Medicare, Medicaid, CHIP, Tricare (for military personnel), the veterans' health system, and the Indian Health Service—a similar agreement to identify and reward quality care across the federal government could have an enormous impact on the cost and quality of health services in the United States. That's basically what IOM is recommending: higher pay ranging from 5 percent to 15 percent for exemplary medical treatment.

Like the California project, the federal initiative recommended by IOM would also pay higher reimbursements to health care providers for making investments in information technology. Such technology is critical for creating low-cost quality measurement systems, and for enabling providers to track their own patients and make sure they are all receiving the right care.

Pay-for-performance is an antidote to the increasing mistrust in the ability of the health care system to deliver high quality care without breaking the bank. Instead of passively accepting rising health care costs as an inevitable outcome of a dysfunctional health care system, elected officials at all levels of government should use pay-for-performance as a tool to ensure that cost increases produce better quality. And in the long run, higher quality care will save money because healthier Americans simply won't need as much care. ◆

Idea of the Week is a regular feature in the Democratic Leadership Council's "New Dem Daily," which is published online at www.ndol.org and is available by email.

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Digital NATION

Internet Users' Report Card of the States

When the weakest dot-coms went dot-bust, cynics said the e-commerce revolution was over. They were wrong. E-commerce is still growing at a robust pace. But the laws are uneven. Some states tax Internet access, others fail to legally recognize digital signatures, and many use legal protections to shield in-state brick-and-mortar companies from out-of-state Internet-based competitors. The Progressive Policy Institute examined this legal patchwork, looking at a range of retail sectors. The table below gives a small sampling. The higher the score, the more e-commerce-friendly the state. The full report, *The Best States for E-Commerce*, is available online: www.ppionline.org.

STATE	OVERALL	CONTACT LENSES	MORTGAGES	AUTOS	STATE	OVERALL	CONTACT LENSES	MORTGAGES	AUTOS
Alabama	5.4	0	0	4	Montana	9.2	0	10	0
Alaska	13.4	5.6	5	2	Nebraska	9.4	6.3	10	0
Arizona	8.4	4	0	0	Nevada	10.9	5	0	0
Arkansas	10.3	0	10	0	New Hampshire	7.8	6.2	10	0
California	5.8	5.5	0	4	New Jersey	9.6	6.2	0	0
Colorado	12.4	5.5	10	0	New Mexico	3.7	0	3	0
Connecticut	10.6	5	10	4	New York	7	5	10	2
DC	11.3	5	10	0	North Carolina	6.2	0	10	0
Delaware	6.9	0	10	0	North Dakota	8.7	0	10	0
Florida	8.2	6.5	10	0	Ohio	6.4	7.5	0	0
Georgia	8.0	0	7	4	Oklahoma	11.1	5	10	0
Hawaii	12.8	5.5	0	8	Oregon	16.6	5.4	10	0
Idaho	12.8	5.5	10	4	Pennsylvania	11.4	5	3	0
Illinois	7.8	3.5	10	0	Rhode Island	9.8	0	10	4
Indiana	14.3	4.5	10	4	South Carolina	3.1	0	0	0
Iowa	13.9	7.2	10	0	South Dakota	8.3	5	10	0
Kansas	11.8	5	10	0	Tennessee	7.3	5	0	4
Kentucky	12	5	10	0	Texas	9.4	5.4	0	0
Louisiana	14.2	6.2	10	0	Utah	14.7	9.5	10	0
Maine	10.9	8.5	10	4	Vermont	9.3	6.5	10	4
Maryland	11.7	6.5	10	0	Virginia	10.4	5.5	10	0
Massachusetts	11.1	5	10	4	Washington	11.4	0	7	0
Michigan	12.6	5	10	0	West Virginia	9.6	0	10	0
Minnesota	10.5	0	3	0	Wisconsin	8.5	0	5	0
Mississippi	10.9	0	10	8	Wyoming	11.6	5.5	10	4
Missouri	10.5	5	0	0	**U.S. Average**	**10**	**4**	**7.1**	**1.3**

WEB SITES

Bureau of Justice Statistics

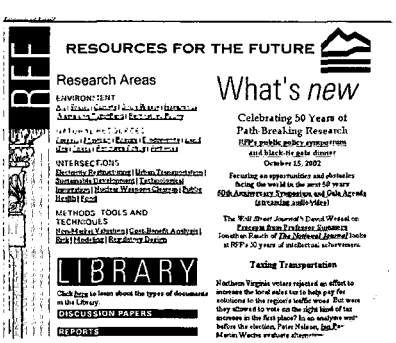
The Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics web site may be the best source on the Web for U.S. crime data. Check out the "Key Facts at a Glance" page for a quick rundown on trends in criminal justice, corrections, and expenditures.

- **Where to get it:** www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs

Resources for the Future

The nonpartisan think tank Resources for the Future is a source for fresh thinking about environmental issues. It advocates policies that use economic incentives to achieve environmental goals. Its web site contains a wide range of policy papers, as well as streaming audio and video of speeches and seminars.

- **Where to get it:** www.rff.org



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Integrating Emergency Response Systems

Giving front-line personnel better tools.

> *by* **Sen. Tom Carper**

Stronger partnerships between federal, state and local governments are no longer simply a means for creating public savings. They are a necessity for ensuring public safety. Critical to this mission are streamlined communications and integrated response systems.

During the terrorist attacks against New York and Washington D.C., the anthrax attacks, and the sniper attacks in Maryland and Virginia, local 9-1-1 operators and emergency call centers were overwhelmed. In some areas, residents found it impossible to have real contact with law enforcement or emergency services at a time when that contact was most needed.

In each case, state, local, and federal officials responded well under difficult circumstances, but the nation learned some important lessons: First, our law enforcement systems need to communicate more effectively, share information more openly, and integrate their operations more seamlessly. Second, the most effective time to set up for a crisis situation is before one begins, not once one is underway. Third, relying on traditional 9-1-1 call systems to handle every emergency is shortsighted and perhaps even dangerous.

Applying those lessons, a number of state and local officials across the nation are building "integrated emergency response systems" that leverage new technologies to give citizens and emergency responders greater flexibility to identify potential threats and respond in crisis situations. They are building these systems in ways that compliment existing emergency response infrastructures, and they are managing to maintain a sense of fiscal discipline in the process.

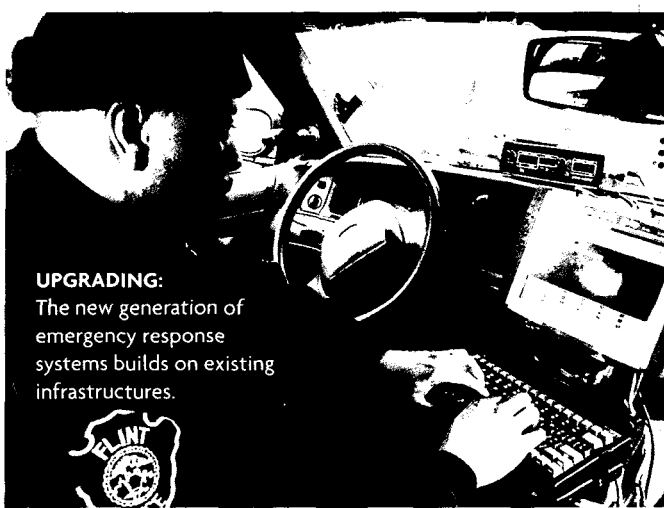
In Detroit, Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick has developed a comprehensive emergency response plan that proactively conducts risk assessments of potential targets such as waterworks and power plants. It identifies both short- and long-term priorities, and provides top-flight emergency response and prevention training. And it encourages community involvement through neighborhood watches.

In New Hampshire, Gov. Jeanne Shaheen recognized that terrorism poses a potential threat to commerce, and that greater cooperation is needed between federal, state, and local governments to address that threat. Her "Operation Safe Commerce" efforts have allowed emergency responders to collect and compare data from a number of sources to detect signs of tampering and better ensure cargo safety.

In Maryland, where emergency responders were unable to coordinate with teams from Virginia and the District of Columbia on Sept. 11 because they were all using different radio frequencies, Lt. Gov. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend helped implement an innovative real-time communications network. A pilot program arms many first responders with handheld computers that allow instant messaging to different jurisdictions. It provides them a way to post information on suspicious activities, persons, or cars, and it gives them access to key law enforcement database records.

One of the critical components in effective integrated response systems is more efficient handling of the calls flooding 9-1-1 lines. Some jurisdictions report that as many as 60 percent are not related to emergencies, putting an undue burden on the system. To alleviate that pressure, many jurisdictions are setting up 3-1-1 systems to disseminate up-to-date information to citizens who don't need immediate help from emergency responders.

The results have been dramatic. Mayor Martin O'Malley reported in 2001 that Baltimore had received 560,574 calls to its 3-1-1 line. Since the city implemented the system in 1996, it has seen both the number of abandoned 9-1-1 calls and the average emergency response time drop by half.



UPGRADING: The new generation of emergency response systems builds on existing infrastructures.

The 3-1-1 system is not only helping to save lives; it is saving taxpayer money. When Mayor O'Malley expanded it to include easy public access to all non-emergency government services, it saved the city $13.2 million by eliminating redundancy, overtime, and extraneous expenditures.

The benefits will snowball as state and local officials around the country add more new innovations to a growing national web of emergency response systems. ◆

> **Sen. Tom Carper** (D-Del.) is the DLC Chair for Best Practices.

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Looking beyond race

Twenty-something African-American cartoonist Aaron McGruder recently held the Rev. Jesse Jackson and the Rev. Al Sharpton up for special ridicule in his syndicated comic strip, "The Boondocks." In a hilarious series, the ministers were cast as self-important, over-inflated movie reviewers with a penchant for inane commentary. McGruder's portrayal was perfect. "How 'bout a movie about a young, good-looking activist next to Dr. King who was with him when he died?" crows the Jackson character.

Jackson, who once sought the Democratic Party nomination for president, seems to many young African-Americans like an aging Hollywood star, desperately seeking to relive those limelight yesteryears and groping for an audience long after the curtains have been drawn. In his search for restored national prominence, he flits from issue to issue, a caricature of himself. But these days, not even Jesse Jackson can do a Jesse Jackson. Despite their imaginings to the contrary, Jackson and Sharpton are narrowly focused, bankrupt leaders who are not ready for the primetime agenda of the new black America.

Yet even this stark reality hasn't stopped Sharpton from trying to imitate the antiquated civil rights leader, who views the world almost exclusively through the prism of race and whose career has been marked by collecting ransoms from corporations that have refused to peer through his dark lens.

Not unlike Jackson, Sharpton has sought, through the fine art of political repackaging, to transform his image from that of small-time New York cultural-nationalist-hustler, protector of Tawana Brawley, and informal federal snitch—to that of African-American statesman. On the road to legitimacy and resurrection he has traveled the world, gotten himself arrested, jumped into the 2000 Florida recount fracas, and established a 2004 presidential exploratory committee. Along the way, he also has exposed his unvarnished ambitions and his unsuitability for national office.

If Jackson didn't make it to the White House, you can bet Sharpton won't either. Many young African-Americans like cartoonist McGruder—the kind Sharpton would need to fulfill his executive dreams—don't share his rather primitive views. In their new black America, life is a collaborative operation, in which blacks are much more willing to plot courses and strategies for success jointly with their white, Hispanic, or Asian counterparts. The young African-Americans I know are far less obsessed with race and history than Sharpton wants them to be. They are concerned with a possible war in Iraq and the dynamics of Middle East politics. They understand the global economy—its advantages and disadvantages—and are preparing to be active participants in the game. They see themselves as savvy, sophisticated internationalists—not as victims; they resent even the implication of victimhood.

These shifting sentiments in the black community can be measured politically. A survey by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a prestigious national think tank, found that a significant percentage of "younger black adults—about one-third [of those surveyed]—are declaring themselves political independents." Further, the Center notes that those born after passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act "more strongly support school vouchers, are less positive toward the federal government and more in favor of devolution, are more supportive of the partial privatization of Social Security, and are more pro-business." These positions are antithetical to Sharpton's.

But don't think the divergence between Sharpton and young black voters is only about substance, although clearly that is the major obstacle he faces in courting this population. Many African-Americans also part ways with the reverend's style. They cringe when they see his 1950s hairdo, which is an homage to another antique idol—soul singer James Brown. Post-civil rights blacks are also irritated by Sharpton's Baptist preacher-civil rights proselytizing, and the Jacksonesque opportunism that causes him to jump on any nearby stage and in front of any bank of television cameras. These young African-Americans see themselves in the image of New Jersey's political activist Cory Booker, Detroit's mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, Texas' senatorial candidate Ron Kirk, and, despite the controversy surrounding their elections, Alabama's Artur Davis and Georgia's Denise Majette, both newly elected to Congress to replace more traditional black politicians.

If Sharpton insists on continuing his race to the White House, he had better start readjusting his lens, scoping out the landscape in which young blacks are traveling, and connecting with the issues that truly matter to them. First order of business might be a conversation with Aaron McGruder. Next on the list: a visit to the nearest black barbershop. ◆

> **jonetta rose barras** is a radio commentator in Washington, D.C., and author of *The Last of the Black Emperors: The Hollow Comeback of Marion Barry in the Age of New Black Leaders* (Bancroft Press, 1998). Her views also appear at www.jrbarras.com.

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BLUEPRINT
November/December 2002

Putting Politics First:

The Triumph of Rovery

President Bush promised to change the tone in Washington. But Karl Rove has taught him that it pays to be partisan.

by **Joshua Green**

President George W. Bush clearly took a big risk and played a major role in the 2002 midterm elections. In the months leading up to the elections, Bush averaged a fund-raising event every four days—67 in all—and raised a record $142 million, largely from special interests. In the final two weeks, at the behest of his political adviser Karl Rove, he crisscrossed the country, fervently campaigning for Republican candidates and delivering not just platitudes, but fiery partisan speeches attacking Democrats for, among other things, not caring about the nation's safety.

Though he famously pledged to govern "based upon principles and not polls or focus groups," Bush's primary pollsters are on pace to earn more than $1 million this year, more than double what they earned last year. No president in memory devoted so much time, effort, and resources to winning a midterm election, a fact Democrats tried to wield against Bush by criticizing his use of Air Force One and other taxpayer-funded resources for such brazenly political ends. Bush leveraged his Cabinet and even leaned on Republican staffers throughout Washington to take vacation time in order to campaign for Republican candidates.

Joshua Green is an editor at *The Washington Monthly*.

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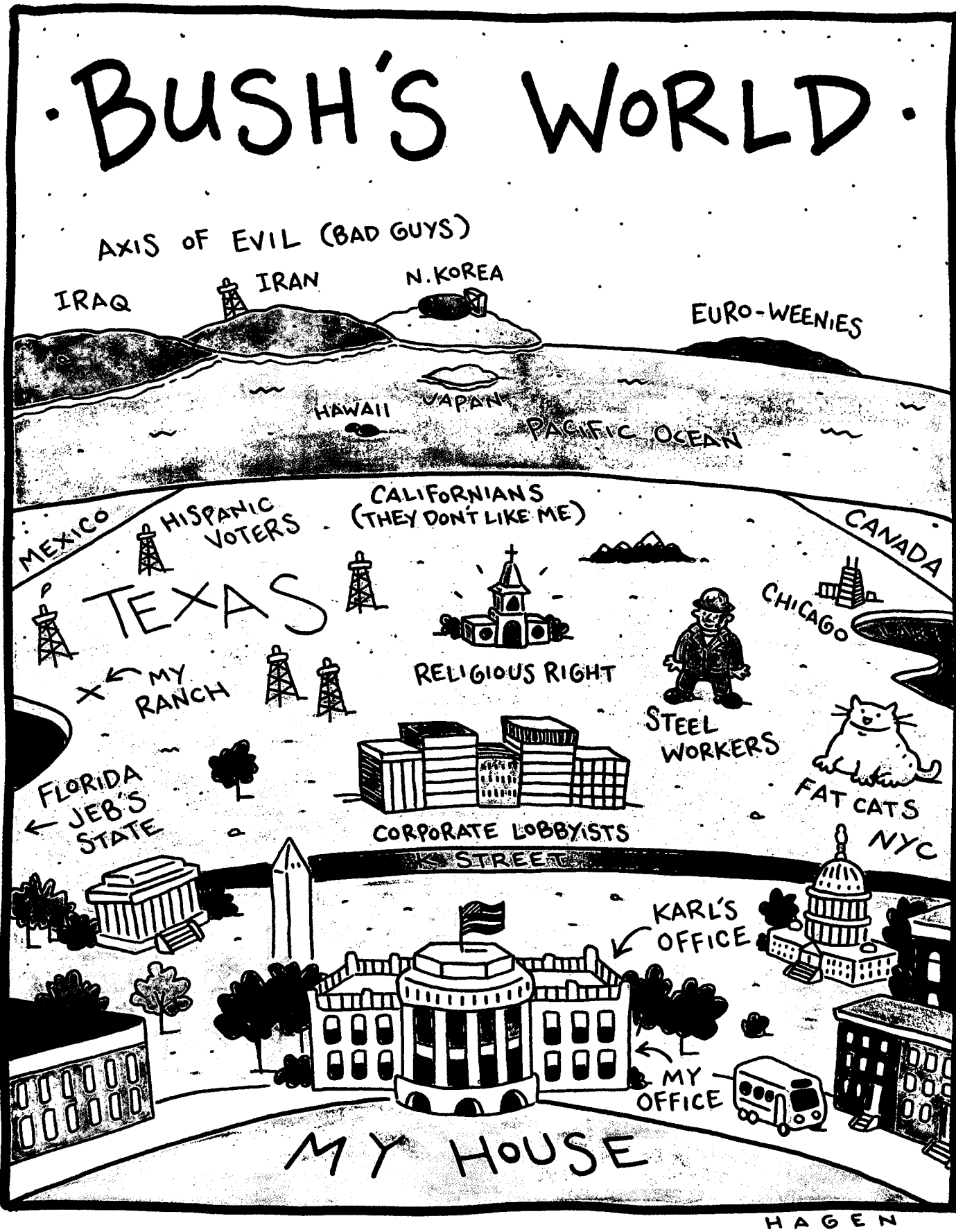

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The collective wisdom of pollsters and pundits in Washington for nearly a decade has been that it is dangerous for a politician to appear crassly political. What is amazing about the openly partisan campaign strategy that Rove crafted for Bush is that the president came away with his stature not diminished, but indeed enhanced. Of course, it helped that his party defied the odds and won a historic victory. But the truth is that Bush has had a similarly partisan style since his earliest days in the White House—on everything from an energy plan geared to please his oil and gas company benefactors to a tax cut for the wealthy that was rammed past Democratic opposition to steel tariffs nakedly crafted for political advantage.

And yet, none of this seems to have caused Americans to view Bush as partisan. A Gallup poll released in May showed that 72 percent of Americans consider the president someone who "puts the country's interests ahead of his own political interests." When the same question was asked about President Bill Clinton in 1999, just 51 percent agreed.

Call it the triumph of Rovery: the art of acting in a thoroughly partisan manner while appearing to be above the political fray. The president's ability to pull this off consistently drives Democrats to distraction and inspires sputtering and not altogether convincing explanations for why Bush's mode of partisanship is viewed as anything other than that. The real answer, surprisingly, has less to do with Bush or Rove than with one of the biggest, but least appreciated, hypocrisies of American politics, especially as practiced inside the Beltway.

When considering Bush's political Teflon, Democrats' first instinct is often to point to the war. Indeed, patriotic impulse tends to quell criticism, especially among conservatives. "Above all else, Republicans see the role of the president—any president—as commander-in-chief," says a senior Republican Senate staffer. "Even those who are angry with some of his decisions believe he is doing well in his most important job: the war." In other words, the many issues on which Bush's policies are driven by politics are eclipsed by one on which they may or may not be.

Difficult scrutiny. Another reason is a changing media climate. When a Democratic president bares his political knuckles, the well-funded chorus of right-wing pundits and publications—from Ann Coulter to *The Weekly Standard*—rise up in full-throated indignation. But no liberal equivalent of the right-wing press exists to lift Republican scandals into the public consciousness. For example, there was little press outcry when Bush accused Senate Democrats of being unpatriotic on homeland security. Nor is there any longer the possibility of an independent prosecutor being appointed who might have the same effect. The result is less overall scrutiny of the administration. As *The Washington Monthly* recently pointed out, only two Bush appointees (including former SEC Chairman Harvey Pitt) have resigned under a cloud, despite administration ties to Enron, the accounting scandals, the California energy crisis, and other unseemly episodes. By contrast, two years into the Clinton administration, 10 appointees had resigned or been forced out; under the elder Bush, eight; and under Ronald Reagan, 13.

The administration's vaunted secrecy also makes scrutiny more difficult. Clintonites perfected the art of leaking stories to reporters in an effort to shape coverage, sometimes using self-serving leaks to win arguments within the administration. Bush officials rarely air disputes in the press and offer no access to reporters, excluding them from the internecine debates whose outcome can often telegraph political calculations. The administration also famously intimidates aggressive beat reporters. The picture that emerges of the Bush White House is one that is less informed—and therefore less attuned to political maneuvering—than previous ones. "We've had our debates," confirms a Republican House leadership member, "but we work them out behind closed doors."

But what's really benefiting Bush is the odd value system that applies in political Washington. For all the talk of putting politics over principle, what Washington values most is politics as principle. The country craves bipartisanship, but Washington pays only lip service to it. The political world rarely holds out for the real thing—a leader who actually changes his party—and is quick to punish anyone with the courage to try it. By contrast, symbolic forays to pick off a few voters in the enemy camp, such as Rove's courtship of unions, are acclaimed as strategic genius and political bravado. Here Rove has excelled at guiding Bush. "He's brilliant," says Rep. Rob Portman (R-Ohio), "and he's done a good job of orchestrating a lot of this."

> "For all the talk of **putting politics** over principle, what Washington **values** most is politics as principle. The country craves bipartisanship, but Washington pays only **lip service** to it."

Two representative examples are the Clinton welfare reform plan and the Bush tax cut. Welfare reform was the centerpiece of Clinton's 1992 campaign, and it required real political courage for him to propose it over the objections of his party's base. Yet almost immediately, the media framed the argument not as a question of the

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PARTNERS IN POLITICS: Following the advice of Rove, right, the president perfected the art of seeming to be above the political fray while in fact being mired in it. The war helped.

best policy, but as whether Clinton would "sell out" to the Republicans. Many liberal Democrats were deeply angered by Clinton's willingness to do that and said so loudly and openly. The public furor from within his own party tainted Clinton with the appearance of having sacrificed his principles to practical necessity, even if, by so doing, he was keeping a promise to set his party—and the country—on a better course.

Pandering as principle. By contrast, the Bush tax cut fulfilled a veritable Republican wish list, eliminating the estate tax, ignoring payroll taxes, and concentrating benefits on the richest 1 percent of Americans. Even on the heels of the bitterly divisive election, Bush fiercely resisted any attempt at bipartisan compromise. Because he had campaigned on the tax cut—even though his rationale for it frequently shifted—he could still be seen as serving his base and his principles at the same time. (As a candidate, Bush actually tried to make a virtue of the fact that the tax cut wasn't popular.) Publicly, this created the appearance of political integrity, regardless of whether the tax cut was actually in the country's best interests. The tax cut was "political" in the sense that it eschewed bipartisanship, but not in the pejorative Washington sense that it was done for one politician's gain at the expense of his party. This is Rove's trademark: pandering as a matter of principle.

Yet, examples abound of issues where Bush has sacrificed well-known Republican principles and received surprisingly little criticism. Many Republicans were upset over the bloated agriculture bill, an education plan that increases the role of the federal government, Bush's capitulation on campaign finance reform, his abandonment of House Republicans on federalizing airport screeners, and his agreement to halt the Navy's bombing in Vieques, Puerto Rico (an issue that resonates much more with conservatives than with Democrats). Here again, Rove's constant attunement to the major GOP issues bred a reciprocal loyalty. "By being true on major issues he buys himself enough confidence and good will to play with things on margins," says Republican consultant Charles Black.

But even here, Rove's shrewd polit-

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ical calculations help insulate Bush from damaging criticism from within his own party, largely because of what he does behind the scenes. When, for instance, the president cynically compromised the future of free trade last March by imposing tariffs on many kinds of imported steel, conservatives were outraged. They saw right away that the plan was a ploy to woo steelworkers in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia, states crucial to the president's re-election hopes in 2004. "This is purely a political decision. There is no economic justification for it," said Gerald O'Driscoll of the Heritage Foundation. George Will hurled the ultimate Republican epithet, declaring Bush "less principled than Bill Clinton."

According to GOP sources, Rove won an internal battle with economic and foreign policy advisers to impose the tariffs and understood how best to mute the resulting criticism. Practically from the moment the tariffs were announced, Rove set out to appease potential critics by gutting the very "relief" Bush had just promised steelworkers. How he managed to get away with it is an instructive example of the stealthy partisanship that characterizes the Bush White House.

Rove knew how much Bush's public character would suffer if the political world saw the tariff actions for what they were: a choice of politics over principle. Had he let the steel tariffs stand, Bush probably would have borne the brunt of criticism from K Street lobbyists and major corporate donors, such as auto manufacturers suddenly faced with higher costs. In the political echo chamber of Washington, this would have imparted to Bush an appearance of naked opportunism—but Rove was ahead of the game. The administration quietly began "excluding" certain kinds of steel from the tariffs, in theory a process driven by economic need. But in this case, says one trade expert, "What's driving the exemption choices is pure politics."

AT POLE'S LENGTH: The partisan intensity of the Bush White House stays hidden behind closed doors, while the presidential staff keeps the press at bay and even intimidates aggressive reporters.

> "Rove won an **internal battle** with economic and foreign policy advisers to impose the **tariffs** and understood how best to **mute** the resulting criticism—by **gutting the relief** Bush had just promised."

Cosmetic centrism. In order to appease corporations angry over higher steel costs, Bush simply excluded them. Major Bush contributors like Daimler-Chrysler and Maytag applied for and received exclusions. Bush even managed to give his brother Jeb a boost granting an exclusion to Berg Steel Pipe, a Florida-based manufacturer of oil and gas pipelines. "Governor Bush was a big influence," Berg CEO David Delie said. "I know he talked personally to the administration." In all, the administration has granted more than 700 exclusions since March—so many that today just 20 percent of imported steel is subject to tariffs at all.

Another reason Bush has not been plagued by dissent is that after eight years of frustration, what conservatives want most is power. "Bush has an advantage that predecessors like Ronald Reagan and Newt Gingrich

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did not," claims GOP strategist Grover Norquist, "Reagan did the impossible—he ran as a conservative and won the presidency. So did Gingrich in taking over Congress. Conservatives saw this and demanded the impossible of them. The movement today is just more patient; we haven't invested in Bush and [House Speaker Dennis] Hastert unrealistic expectations of what they can do. Are we disappointed about steel and the ag bill? Yes. Do we wish we could have had that in addition to our primary issue? Yes. Having not gotten it are we going to vote for the other team or stay home? No." Of course, it doesn't hurt that conservatives are getting almost everything they want. Rove meets with Norquist and company every week to make sure.

Rove himself probably wouldn't dispute the fact that compassionate conservatism is merely "cosmetic centrism"—centrist rhetoric with right-wing results. On the contrary, he must be tickled at how well he's gotten away with it. Yet while it has been highly effective so far, the Bush-Rove juggling act probably can't last indefinitely. The quiet dismantling of steel tariffs, for instance, may not yield the hoped-for Republican bounce in 2004. Shortly after the tariffs were announced, the European Union declared its intention to levy $300 million in retaliatory sanctions—but by late September, after the Bush administration had backed down on some of its announced steel tariffs, the EU changed its mind. Steelworkers may take note and vote accordingly.

On a broader level, the midterm elections have unmasked some of the administration's more partisan impulses. In June, a PowerPoint presentation surfaced, apparently concocted by Rove, urging GOP candidates to "focus on the war." In late October, *The Washington Post* revealed that 330 administration appointees—some apparently under duress—were spending vacation time working on GOP campaigns. *The Post* also reported that Bush had developed a track record of lying—or at least using false evidence—to muster political support for a war with Iraq (see sidebar).

Before Sept. 11, 2001, the president's approval rating was sinking. More fundamentally, a large portion of the electorate viewed him as thoroughly partisan. Basic political sense suggests an eventual correction in the curious disconnect between the State of the Union and the state of Bush's approval ratings.

This could actually be hastened by the Republican takeover of Congress. Conservatives who previously gave Bush the political leeway he needed to win a majority will no longer feel compelled to hold their criticism, now that the White House has no real opposition to contend with in Washington. This will, in fact, make the Rove-Bush balancing act significantly more difficult to maintain.

As *The Economist* recently noted, "Mr. Bush is as partisan a president as America has had." Whatever benefit he has derived from pretending to be above politics, Bush is likely to lose for the very reason that he is only pretending: At the end of the day, he refuses to break with his conservative base. That kind of politics is what made the American people want to change the tone in Washington in the first place. They're still waiting. ◆

extras New Democrats Online > NDOL.org Search: Extra Rovery

Elastic facts

President Bush shows few qualms about stretching facts to achieve his political ends, as this excerpt from an article by Dana Milbank in The Washington Post *on October 22 shows:*

President Bush, speaking to the nation this month about the need to challenge Saddam Hussein, warned that Iraq has a growing fleet of unmanned aircraft that could be used "for missions targeting the United States."

Last month, asked if there were new and conclusive evidence of Hussein's nuclear weapons capabilities, Bush cited a report by the International Atomic Energy Agency saying the Iraqis were "six months away from developing a weapon." And last week, the president said objections by a labor union to having customs officials wear radiation detectors has the potential to delay the policy "for a long period of time."

All three assertions were powerful arguments for the actions Bush sought. And all three statements were dubious, if not wrong. Further information revealed that the aircraft lack the range to reach the United States; there was no such report by the IAEA; and the customs dispute over the detectors was resolved long ago.

As Bush leads the nation toward a confrontation with Iraq and his party into battle in midterm elections, his rhetoric has taken some flights of fancy in recent weeks. Statements on subjects ranging from the economy to Iraq suggest that a president who won election underscoring Al Gore's knack for distortions and exaggerations has been guilty of a few himself.... ◆

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Some Good News

A dynamic group of governors made gains nationwide.

by **Ed Kilgore**

It wasn't the big sweep many had hoped for, but on a night when they lost seats in the House and control of the Senate, Democrats actually made gains among governorships, long the incubator of New Democrat policy innovations—and of successful presidential candidates.

The big trend in gubernatorial elections was high turnover. Twenty-four of the 36 governors elected on Nov. 5 are new. And more remarkably, 20 of the 24 new governors are of a different party than their predecessors. The final count leaves us with 24 Democratic governors and 26 Republican governors in 2003 (prior to Nov. 5 the count was 21 Democrats, 27 Republicans, and two Independents).

For Democrats, the news is that their gubernatorial "takeovers" were concentrated in two areas: Industrial Belt "blue states" from Pennsylvania to Wisconsin that were dominated by Republican governors for the last eight or more years, and the Plains and Mountains region where Democrats had no governors at all prior to these elections.

In Pennyslvania, New Democrat (and former Philadelphia Mayor) Ed Rendell won the governorship by a comfortable margin after eight years of Republican rule in Harrisburg. His message, focused on private-sector economic growth and financing K-12 education, not only seemed to heal a long-standing regional and ideological split in the Pennsylvania Democratic Party, but also attracted an impressive number of independents and Republicans, with thousands of GOP voters changing registration.

WINNING THE CENTER: Governor-elect Ed Rendell healed divisions among Pennsylvania Democrats and attracted Republicans and swing voters.

In Michigan, New Democrat Attorney General Jennifer Granholm broke an even longer Republican winning streak by becoming the first Democratic gubernatorial winner since 1986. Granholm pledged to deal with Michigan's chronic budget problems through a serious priority-setting process, and also focused on the state's badly outworn transportation system.

In Illinois, Congressman Rod Blagojevich won a tough campaign marked by fallout from a variety of ethics scandals involving the administration of outgoing Republican Gov. George Ryan. Incredibly, Blagojevich became the first Democratic governor of Illinois since 1976. Democrats managed to take back control of the state senate as well, giving them total control of Illinois state government for the first time since the early days of disco.

In Wisconsin, Attorney General Jim Doyle unseated incumbent GOP Gov. Scott McCallum (who became governor in 2001 when long-time GOP Gov. Tommy Thompson joined George W. Bush's Cabinet as secretary of health and human services). Doyle, who ran on a centrist economic development platform, takes over a state government buffeted by a bipartisan ethics scandal even worse than Illinois'. He is the first Democratic governor of Wisconsin since 1986.

While many of the Midwestern gubernatorial wins were predicted earlier in the year, Democrats did far better than almost anyone expected in the Plains and Mountain regions, picking up five of 10 gov-

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ernorships at stake in a region where they held none prior to the election.

The landslide win of Kansas Insurance Commissioner Kathleen Sebelius was one of the most remarkable in the country. A long-time New Democrat, Sebelius won in part by compiling a nationally renowned record as insurance commissioner, building credibility as a highly competent manager and policy innovator. Exploiting divisions between moderates and social conservatives in the Kansas GOP, she managed to win a solid victory in a state where registered Republicans significantly outnumber Democrats.

In Arizona, another New Democrat woman, Attorney General Janet Napolitano, won a close victory over Republican Congressman Matt Salmon. Napolitano beat an outspoken liberal in the Democratic primary and used her reputation as a crime-fighting state prosecutor—including successful actions against corporate criminals—to win over independents and moderate Republicans.

In Wyoming, former U.S. Attorney David Freudenthal ran a textbook centrist campaign, with a heavy emphasis on fiscal discipline, to upset state House Speaker Eli Bebout and return Vice President Cheney's home state to the Democratic column.

An even bigger shocker occurred in Oklahoma, where state Senator Brad Henry focused like a laser on better public education, especially for the state's rural areas, and upset Republican Congressman and former NFL star Steve Largent.

By contrast, the results in New Mexico were no surprise, since former Congressman, Energy Secretary, and U.N. Ambassador Bill Richardson was expected to take back this state for Democrats from virtually the moment he announced his candidacy. A long-time New Democrat, Richardson won by a landslide.

Even in regions where the overall results for Democrats in governors' races were disappointing, there were definite bright spots.

In New England, the bright spot was Maine, where Congressman John Baldacci took the governorship despite being

TAKEOVERS: Janet Napolitano in Arizona, top, Kathleen Sebelius in Kansas, middle, and Jennifer Granholm in Michigan, bottom, all won governorships previously held by Republicans.

the target of constant attacks from both a Republican and Green Party opponent. He succeeds Independent Angus King, who served two terms.

And in the South, former Nashville Mayor Phil Bredesen bucked a Republican tide to win Tennessee's governorship with a campaign message (much like that of Virginia's Mark Warner in 2001) that focused on economic growth and tough management as the solution to the state's deep budget crisis.

Finally, despite all of the turnover, two key New Democrat incumbent governors won re-election. In Iowa, Tom Vilsack won by a comfortable margin over a highly touted Republican challenger, with the incumbent getting substantial credit for his efforts to weather a farm crisis and a revenue-sapping economic downturn in his state. Vilsack became the first Democrat to be re-elected governor of Iowa since the 1960s.

While in California, Gray Davis convinced voters that his administration offered voters the best way out of a budget crisis, and that his Republican opponent harbored views far out of the political mainstream. Davis is the first Democrat to win a second term in the Golden State since Jerry Brown, whose chief of staff was none other than Gray Davis.

Some Republican gubernatorial wins this year—notably in Georgia, Maryland, and Hawaii—represented long-overdue breakthroughs in states that have gone Democratic since time out of mind. Others—such as Alabama and South Carolina—were in states that have been and will probably continue to be, seesawing back and forth between the two parties. In still others—clearly Texas and Florida—the full power and popularity of the president was brought to bear on the outcome.

In general, the gubernatorial races can be viewed as closing the book on the Republican landslide of 1994, with only six states remaining continuously in the GOP column since then. It's clear the governorships are back in parity, reflecting the deeper parity between the two parties that exists at every level of government.

But it's even clearer that Democrats will benefit from a new crop of exceptionally talented governors who will develop and test ideas for meeting the nation's key challenges in the years and decades ahead.

Just as a young governor named Bill Clinton championed the original set of New Democrat ideas in the early 1990s, we expect new governors like Ed Rendell, Jennifer Granholm, Kathleen Sebelius, Janet Napolitano, and Bill Richardson to be fonts of innovative governing ideas for New Democrats in this decade. ◆

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Where's the Recovery?

So far, Bushonomics has failed to provide the spark we need.

by **Jeff Lemieux**

A long slide. Financial markets have continued to plunge during the first two years of Bush's term. By mid-November 2002, the benchmark S&P 500 index had fallen 20 percent for the year, after tumbling 15 percent in 2001 and 6 percent in 2000.

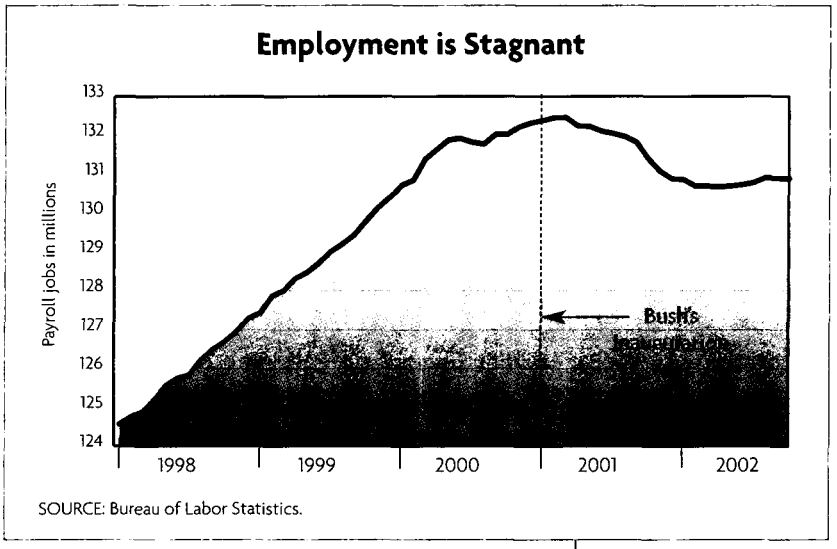
Two big fears are holding back the markets: fear that corporate earnings reports remain unreliable, and fear of a "double-dip" recession, possibly complicated by falling prices, or deflation.

The administration blew it at the Securities and Exchange Commission by appointing a weak leader, Harvey Pitt, whose handling of the new accounting oversight board caused a scandal and forced his resignation.

Although the chances of deflationary recession are slim, Bush's supply-side tax strategy is counterintuitive. Wall Street pundits love tax cuts, but savvy investors know that trying to increase *supply* in a recession doesn't make sense when insufficient *demand* is the main worry.

The recession wasn't so bad, but the recovery stinks. Ultra-low interest rates have propped up the economy since the fourth quarter of 2001, as Americans bought cars and refinanced their homes. However, if consumers stop spending before businesses resume investing, the fragile recovery could flip back to a recession.

For consumers, the problems are jobs and wealth. Businesses haven't started hiring, and layoff notices surged in October. Since the beginning of the recession in March 2001, the number of jobs has fallen by almost 1.6 million, and there are no signs yet that the job market will resume a 1990s-style growth rate.



And in the last eight months alone, the continuing bear market has lopped off $2 trillion in shareholders' equity. If the job market stays weak and stocks stay down, consumers may run out of gas.

▷ **Jeff Lemieux** is senior economist at the Progressive Policy Institute.

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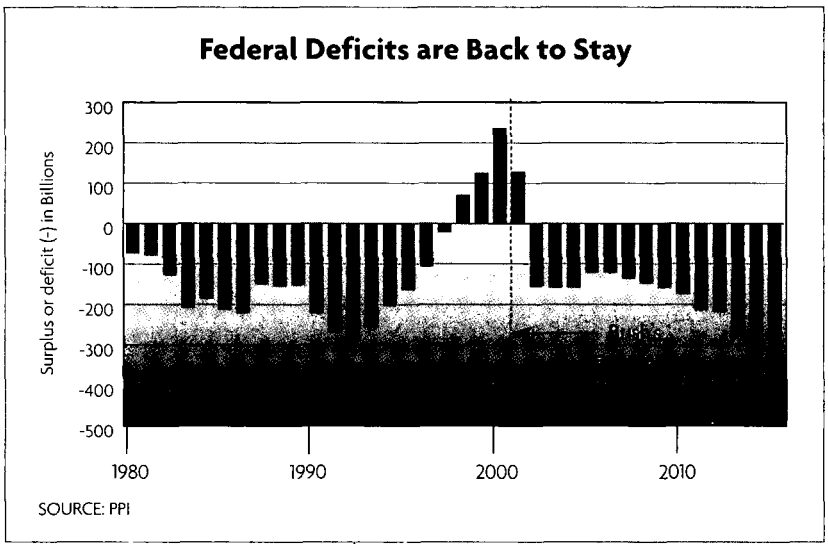


Tax cuts: Weak stimulus, big deficits. Bush's signature tax cut was supposed to spark the economy, but so far, it hasn't done much. The $300 tax refunds certainly helped consumers in 2001, but most of the Bush tax cut hasn't yet been phased in—the largest reductions in income tax rates are slated for 2006, and the estate tax will not be repealed until 2010.

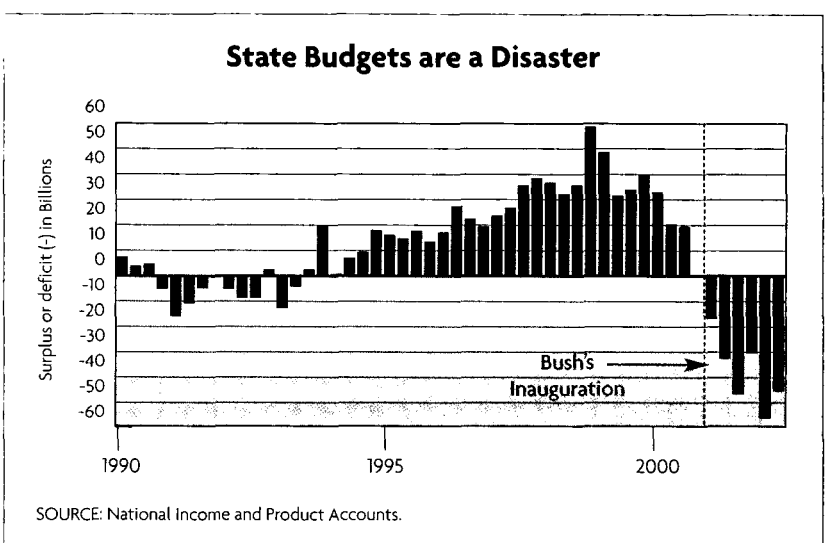
Meanwhile, the Progressive Policy Institute (PPI) now projects federal deficits will total $1.6 trillion over the next 10 years, before exploding after 2010 when the baby boomers start to retire and collect entitlement benefits. Instead of paying off the national debt in 10 years, we're building it back up.

Recession and unanticipated defense spending caused the budget deficit of $159 billion in fiscal year 2002. However, the longer-term deficits mostly stem from the pre-scheduled elements of Bush's tax cut.

In retrospect, Bush got it backward: The economy needed larger tax refunds and fiscal stimulus in the short run, especially for lower- and middle-income families with a high propensity to consume. Bush's tax cuts for upper-income households in 2006 and 2010 are doing no economic good now, and they create budget uncertainties that cloud the economic outlook.

Missing ingredients. The recession of 2001 and the hesitant recovery of 2002 followed an extraordinary period of economic growth. The stellar economy of the mid- and late-1990s featured unemployment rates at 30-year lows, the highest sustained productivity growth since the 1960s, solid wage gains across the income distribution, and minimal inflation.

Now, the New Economy of the 1990s is both a hero and a villain. The 1990s' surge in output per worker and wages, and the low inflation and interest rates were real. Unfortunately, the stock market bubble and phony accounting were real, too.



The economy needs a "paid for" stimulus package, including new temporary stimulus measures that really work, and reforms to the unemployment system, including transitional "COBRA" health coverage. Congress should offset the cost of new stimulus measures by canceling the 2006 and 2010 tax cuts.

Finally, we must address the fiscal crisis in the states. However, any new federal aid to the states must be tied to establishment of substantial "rainy day" funds when the states' economies improve. ◆

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The pitfalls of pre-emption

As if to compensate for the modesty of his domestic agenda, President Bush has ambitious plans to remake U.S. foreign policy. Exhibit A is his new doctrine of pre-emption, which asserts a unilateral American right to attack countries we think may threaten us. It's big, bold, and dangerously wrong.

The administration rightly argues that America needs new strategies for dealing with a new web of interlacing threats: terrorism, ethnic and communal violence, and the potential spread of nuclear weapons to outlaw regimes like those in Iraq and North Korea. There's also no doubt that the United States has every right to attack al Qaeda and other stateless terrorist networks before they strike us.

Attacking sovereign nations, however, is a more complicated matter. According to the White House's new strategy document, pre-emption is necessary because the United States can no longer rely on deterrence—the threat of a massive retaliatory strike—to defend itself. What worked against the "risk-averse" Soviet Union, says the Bush administration, won't work against "leaders of rogue states more willing to take risks, gambling with the lives of their people, and the wealth of their nations."

But is this sweeping claim true? For the Taliban, maybe, but they were a special case. Even the charter members of the "axis of evil"—Saddam Hussein, Kim Jong Il, and Iran's ruling mullahs—have shown no inclination to commit regime suicide by directly attacking America. Unlike terror groups, rogue states have return addresses and can't evade the logic of deterrence.

Might they be more aggressive if they acquired nuclear weapons? Saddam has said his one regret in attacking Kuwait is that he didn't wait until he had the Bomb, presumably because he believes it would have deterred the United States from launching the 1991 Gulf War. And might unfriendly regimes secretly aid and encourage terrorists, even giving them nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons to use against us? These fears are certainly plausible, but the United States can't go around knocking off regimes on the basis of worst-case scenarios and speculative dangers. The answer to the vexing problem of rogue states shouldn't be to make America a rogue superpower.

This doesn't mean that pre-emptive strikes are always, like Pearl Harbor, dastardly and infamous. In 1967, Israel wisely decided not to wait for its Arab neighbors to strike the first blow as they mobilized for an attack on the Jewish state. In fact, it's a settled principle of international law that nations can act in self-defense when they are in imminent danger of being attacked.

But what if we aren't sure? The Bush doctrine would substitute a new standard—the gravity of the potential threat to the United States—for actual evidence that an attack is imminent. "The greater the threat, the greater is the risk of inaction—and the more compelling the case for taking anticipatory action to defend ourselves, even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy's attack," it says.

Since America has always had, and sometimes exercised, the option of striking pre-emptively (even when the "threat" seemed pretty remote—think Grenada and Panama), it's not clear what purpose is served by declaring it the new organizing principle of U.S. foreign policy. Such a shift carries three clear dangers:

First, it would be profoundly destabilizing, because other countries would surely follow America's lead. In India's eyes, neighboring Pakistan poses a graver and more immediate threat than Iraq does to us. And suppose China chooses to interpret some future U.S. arms sale to Taiwan as an "imminent threat" to its security? It's naive to think other countries will cede America an exclusive right to pre-empt.

Second, the threat of pre-emption seems more likely to rattle its presumed targets than to make them more tractable. North Korea's isolated and paranoid regime, for example, has cited Bush's inflammatory "axis of evil" rhetoric in refusing to abandon its nuclear weapons program.

Third, the White House strategy reinforces growing fears around the world of unbridled American power. Indeed, its unspoken premise seems to be that America has now grown so disproportionately powerful that it no longer needs to cooperate with other countries on security. It reflects the administration's abiding urge to trade the constraints of U.S. global leadership—all those tiresome alliances, world bodies, and treaties that we, more than any nation, willed into creation—for the freedom of action the United States would supposedly gain by going it alone.

More likely, unilateralism would isolate our country and even conjure up an anti-American alliance determined to restore a global balance of power. Democrats should expose the Bush doctrine for what it is—the right's old isolationist illusion in a new guise—and seize the opportunity it presents to challenge the GOP's supposed mastery of national security. ●

Will Marshall is president of the Progressive Policy Institute.

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BEST BUDS Saddam Hussein and Yasser Arafat share the love at a 1979 meeting in Havana. Saddam became Arafat's greatest supporter in rejecting peace with Israel

Why Saddam Should Go First

Arab-Israeli peace would be more achievable after Saddam is gone. There are four reasons why.

by **Barry Rubin**

One of the major arguments against a U.S. attack on Iraq is that it would damage prospects for a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and increase regional instability. In fact, the very opposite may be true if—and this is an admittedly big "if"—Saddam Hussein is overthrown and replaced by a government that demonstrably improves life for the Iraqi people.

▷ **Barry Rubin** is director of the Global Research in International Affairs (GLORIA) Center. His most recent books are *The Tragedy of the Middle East* (Cambridge University Press) and *Anti-American Terrorism and the Middle East* (Oxford University Press).

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To understand why the path to improving the regional situation may in fact go through Baghdad, one must first grasp several basic realities that are often poorly understood.

The first reality is that the Arab-Israeli peace process as it has existed for the past decade is over. Yasser Arafat's rejection of peace and resorting to violence in 2000 convinced the overwhelming majority of Israelis that he would never make a deal, that his ultimate goal is Israel's destruction, and that continuing to take risks for peace in this situation would endanger the country's very existence.

Moreover, the hostile international reaction against Israel showed the unreliability of the foreign promises that would underpin any negotiated agreement. Even after the unprecedented concessions Israel offered in 2000 at Camp David and then accepting the Clinton plan, the Europeans largely failed to recognize how hard Israel tried to make peace or to acknowledge its right to self-defense in facing a terrorist war launched against it. This was a disappointment for Israel, almost on a scale with the terrorist attacks themselves.

The nearly simultaneous rejection of Israeli peace proposals based on major concessions by the Palestinian Authority, Lebanon, and Syria suggested that the conflict with Israel was simply too useful for Arab regimes to give up. Whipping up anti-Israel sentiment remains a major tool for Arab dictatorships to retain power despite their corruption, incompetence, and oppressiveness.

NEW WORLD, NEW WAR

continues BLUEPRINT's examination of the war on terrorism, at home and abroad.

The second reality is that the momentum of domestic reform in the Arab world has stalled. Political deadlock between ruling oligarchs and Islamist dissenters prevents any advance for democracy, human rights, civil liberties, a free enterprise market system, and, therefore, better relations with the United States. Dictators have silenced moderate reformers, leaving virtually all the oppositionist role to the radical Islamists. Ironically, the Islamists share the rulers' disdain for the very measures of reform and moderation that are needed to solve the Arab world's problems.

The third reality is that almost all Middle Eastern leaders are dictators who are primarily motivated by power politics rather than ideology or popular sentiment. They view the United States through that lens. If America seems strong, they avoid confrontation, and in some cases, seek to persuade the United States, the world's sole superpower, to support them. When America seems weak, the moderates distance themselves and the radicals become aggressive.

Iran's Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Libya's Muammar Qadhafi, Syria's Hafiz al-Asad, Iraq's Saddam Hussein, terrorist leader Osama bin Laden, and others all shared that same philosophy for many decades. Arabs (and Iranians since 1979) have been taught daily that the United States is evil. This message has been delivered systematically in schools, mosques, and the state-controlled media and has come from every other direction for years. Despite the talk of public opinion forcing certain, especially anti-American, policies, it is the palace that rules, sets the dominant world view, and usually ignores the "Arab street."

Even Egypt, which has received $2 billion a year in U.S. aid, and Saudi Arabia, shielded by U.S. soldiers from Saddam's aggression in 1991, systematically spread anti-Americanism among their own people to insulate them from the appeals of reform or Westernization.

The political opposition in these countries, dominated by Islamist groups, not only shared but amplified these anti-American views. While the rulers condemned America for interfering in their affairs, the opposition claimed America was keeping the repressive rulers in power. In both cases, there were few examples and little evidence for such claims.

What was most important was the fact that throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the impression grew that the United States, for all its military and economic might, could be confronted with impunity. Those favoring this course argued that the world's sole superpower was actually a cowardly, feeble paper tiger. Qadhafi, Asad, Saddam, bin Laden, and at times, Arafat suggested that if only the United States was hit by determined governments or terrorists, it would crumble.

Those advocating anti-American action—instead of just nasty words—cited a long list of events which persuaded them that the United States was ripe for a fall. These included the U.S. defeat in Vietnam, its failure to rescue the Shah of Iran, its alleged flight from terrorists in Lebanon and Somalia, the supposed decadence of its society, domestic opposition to tough action, the failure to destroy Saddam in 1991, and many others.

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Extra Middle East

The September 11, 2001, attacks were explicitly intended to intimidate America and prove its vulnerability in order to encourage Muslims to fight it. By invading Afghanistan and overthrowing its Taliban regime, the United States partly countered this effort. Yet bin Laden's probable escape and continued al Qaeda activity fans doubts in the region about America's strength and resolve.

But if the United States overthrows Saddam, it would be harder to sustain such doubts. Rulers may still stoke anti-American propaganda—precisely because they fear the appeal of American and reformist arguments—but they will shrink from any real confrontation with U.S. power.

Thus, toppling Saddam would change the Middle East

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STREET SCENES: Demonstrators on the "Arab street," like these in Lebanon in 2002, are visible and vocal. But power flows from the palace, and the palaces shrink from confrontation with America.

equation in a positive direction in at least four ways: It would end Iraq's financial support for Palestinian terrorists; undermine the Arab side's belief that it has a radical, violent alternative to a negotiated settlement; further discredit Saddam's closest Middle East ally, Yasser Arafat; and change the perception of the United States as too weak to force any compromise from Arabs or Palestinians.

A U.S. victory in Iraq, especially one that resulted in a stable, more representative government, would unnerve radical regimes. And if Iran, Syria, Libya, and Lebanese Hezbollah reduced their terrorist activity to avoid becoming America's next target, terror and bloodshed would decline.

Arafat would also be scared by the defeat of his favorite Arab leader. In 1990, he thought Saddam would bring him victory, telling Saddam at a March 1990 Baghdad rally, "We will enter Jerusalem victorious. ... You will enter with me, riding on your white stallion." Saddam told Arafat, "We shall not need any more any concessions or political efforts" because Iraq's "air force and accurate missiles" would defeat Israel. On January 7, 1991, Arafat told a Baghdad rally on the eve of the U.S. attack that "Iraqis and Palestine [will be] together, side by side," fighting the Americans.

Saddam's overthrow by the United States would likely persuade Arafat that, at least for tactical reasons, he should accept a cease-fire and end the current bloodshed.

Finally, if a post-Saddam Iraq is not viewed in the Arab world as a U.S. puppet and offers more freedom and better living standards, it would be a huge win for the cause of moderate reform in the region. In fact, it could trigger the third great revolution in recent Middle Eastern history.

The first took place in Egypt in 1952, with the end of colonialism and the rise of Arab nationalist movements and regimes. As these governments failed and the promise of pan-Arabism dimmed, Islamists sought to fill the void. The second big revolution started in Iran in 1979 and saw fundamentalist ferment spread from Algeria to Sudan to Indonesia. Now, widespread disillusionment with Islamism could open the door to modern ideas about economic and political freedom. Iran could be the country most immediately affected, encouraging the large but frustrated reform movement and producing a wave of pro-American feeling there.

Just as the U.S. victory in the 1991 Gulf War set the stage for the Oslo peace process, a successful campaign to overthrow Saddam could also be a catalyst for new and more positive developments in the Middle East. That experience should remind us that while armed conflict is always fraught with peril, a military victory coupled with a successful postwar reconstruction effort in Iraq would more likely strengthen than weaken America's hand in dealing with the Middle East. ◆

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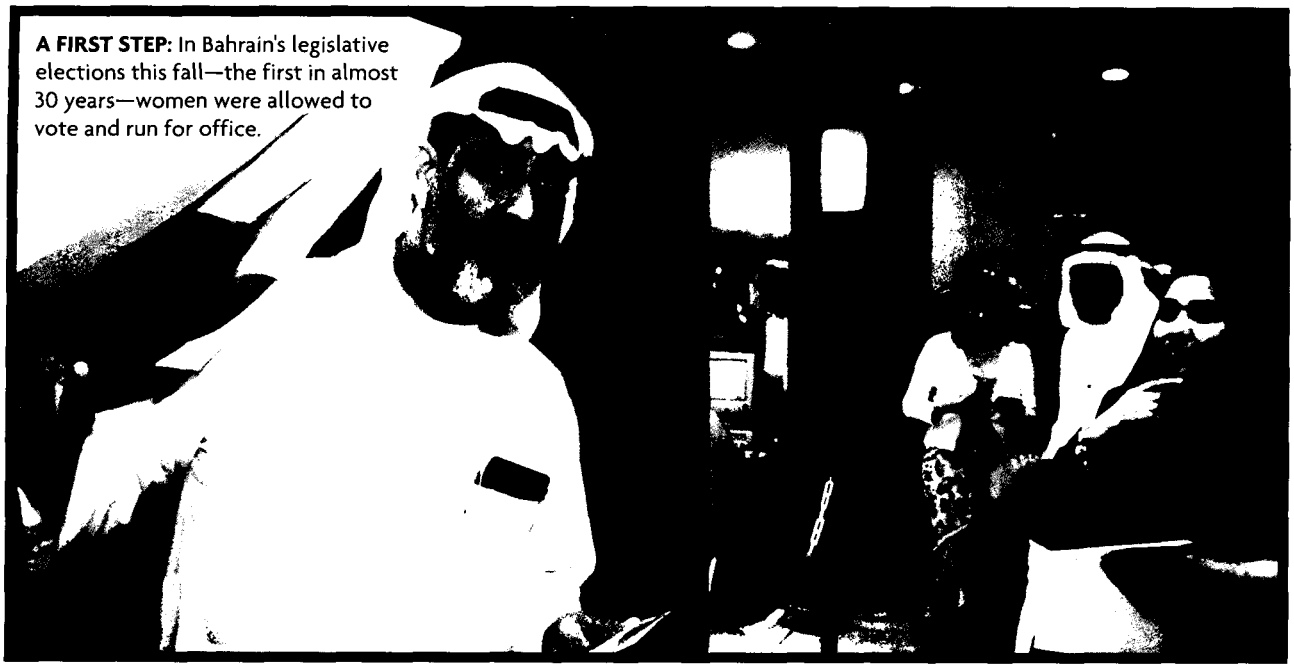

A FIRST STEP: In Bahrain's legislative elections this fall—the first in almost 30 years—women were allowed to vote and run for office.

The Middle East Democracy Deficit

Instead of supporting repressive regimes, the United States should tie aid to reforms. More stability isn't the alternative to Islamic extremism—democracy is.

by **Steven J. Nider**

A glaring contradiction haunts America's war on terrorism. While President Bush has cast the war as a fight for freedom and democracy, he persists in cultivating close ties with Arab governments that are among the least democratic in the world, such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt. This double standard, a legacy of Cold War diplomacy, undermines America's efforts to win the crucial battle for hearts and minds in the Muslim world.

During the Cold War, the United States vied with the Soviet Union to win friends and influence in the oil-rich Middle East. Our primary concern was to keep key countries in the region out of the communist camp, not to see Western-style democracy take root. Now, however, our strategic interest lies in transforming a regional political culture that breeds harsh repression, stunted economic prospects, extremist violence, and hatred of America and modernity itself.

The United States must put vigorous and consistent defense of democratic values at the core of its Middle East diplomacy. Otherwise we will continue to lay ourselves open to the charge of hypocrisy, leveled both by the region's beleaguered democratic reformers and by radical Islamists, for whom America's propping up of corrupt and autocratic regimes is a propaganda windfall.

A pro-democracy campaign should begin with sustained, high-level U.S. pressure on our so-called "moderate" allies in the region, who routinely trample basic political and civil rights. In Egypt, for example, a prominent democracy advocate was sentenced to seven years in a Cairo prison for speaking out against President Hosni Mubarak's administration. Saad Eddin Ibrahim, head of Cairo's Ibn-Khaldun Institute—a think tank that propagates democratic values—was charged with tarnishing Egypt's image, receiving foreign funds without authorization, and embezzlement. His actual crime was exposing electoral fraud and suggesting that Mubarak—who has been consistently re-elected with 97-percent majorities since 1980—was grooming his son to succeed him. United States officials responded to Ibrahim's imprisonment by threatening to withhold additional foreign aid until his release. Yet the act was largely symbolic, as it did not imperil the bulk of the aid Egypt receives from the United States.

The United States needs to take a more aggressive stance. It's time to stop being the bulwark of an untenable status quo in the Middle East and start acting like a revolutionary power again. The alternative to Islamic extremism and vio-

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lence is not more stability; it's more democracy. So, we should redirect U.S. foreign aid from governments to efforts to support human rights groups, promote political parties, develop fair and impartial legal systems, and otherwise bolster civil institutions independent from state control.

What happened in the former Soviet bloc shows that change is possible in previously hardcore anti-democratic regimes. Islamic and Arab nations fit the same profile; they remain isolated from the worldwide trend toward democratic reforms. A widely hailed 2002 report jointly written by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development and strongly endorsed by moderate Arab intellectuals broke new ground in assessing, from an Arab point of view, what needs to be done to lift the region out of the mire of anti-modernism.

"The wave of democracy that transformed governance in most of the world has barely reached the Arab states," it declared. "The freedom deficit undermines human development and is one of the most painful manifestations of lagging political development." In addition, a December 2001 report by Freedom House, the New York-based monitor of political and civil rights, ranked Iraq, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Syria among the 10 least free nations in the world.

The region also remains among the most economically isolated in the world, with less trade, apart from oil exports, to glue it to the world economy. Most countries in the region stand largely apart from the institutions that promote global economic integration.

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By charting a new course, the United States can demonstrate to ordinary people throughout the Islamic world that we will take risks to support their aspirations of freedom and to improve their quality of life. Those values should be the premise of our alliances and a condition of our aid. Specifically, U.S. foreign aid should be geared toward promoting education, particularly for females, in the Muslim world.

Despite recent progress, the UNDP report found that women in the Middle East suffer from unequal citizenship and legal entitlements, often evident in voting rights and legal codes. Political and economic participation among Arab women remains the lowest in the world in quantitative terms, as evidenced by the very low numbers of women in parliaments, cabinets, and the work force. Most are denied equal opportunity in jobs and wages. And more than half of Arab women are still illiterate.

Tying U.S. foreign aid to economic and political liberalization also would help us avoid problems that have plagued previous development efforts. No longer is development seen as simply a matter of transfers of resources and expertise from rich countries to poor. Governance and political culture not only matter, they are fundamental to economic progress. Yet the United States continues to send Egypt $2 billion a year, of which $1.3 billion goes to military assistance. This aid helps prop up a stagnant, corrupt regime, but it also buys us immense ill will from Egyptians desperate for change and hope.

Although periods of political openness have existed in countries such as Jordan and Lebanon, the Arab world has never sustained a fully open and democratic society—and that lack of openness has bred extremism. Many extremist groups, such as Egypt's Islamic Jihad and Gamaa al Islamiya, were founded after governments outlawed and imprisoned tens of thousands of members of the Muslim Brotherhood, founded in the late 1920s. In fact, the original aim of Osama bin Laden and many other terrorist leaders was to overthrow secular Arab governments they see as corrupted by Western money and values. When governments like those of Egypt and Algeria cracked down, Islamic extremists often turned their ire on foreigners and, in bin Laden's case, the United States.

There's always the risk that democracy in the Middle East will bring radical Islamists to power. In too many Arab countries, Islamist radicals are the only effective opposition. In fact, harsh repression by corrupt and widely despised regimes tends to validate the bin Ladens of the world. True stability will only come when citizens are enfranchised and have a stake in an open political and economic order. And if Islamic radicals had to contend with others in a robust marketplace of freely expressed ideas, it's doubtful that they could win over the moderate majority of people in the Middle East who, like people everywhere, are naturally averse to terrorist violence.

We should embrace free elections, gambling on democracy's oft-demonstrated power to temper extremism by letting citizens give voice to their grievances and seek political remedies. Turkey's 2002 election showed us that democracy could be compatible with Muslim traditions. Contrary to many press reports, the victorious Justice and Development Party repudiated its own Islamist political tradition early on. It ran on a platform of integrating Turkey with the European Union, advancing democratization, and liberalizing the political system. Another positive trend can be seen in Iran, where the public seems to be wearying of Islamic theocracy and is agitating for greater freedom.

America's moral authority will continue to erode so long as extremists can blame the United States for supporting repressive regimes. Let's instead employ America's considerable arsenal of "soft power"—our economic prowess, our pervasive popular culture, and our democratic ideals—to support the people of this misruled region. Just as the values of the open society triumphed over the collectivist dreams of communists, democracy will prove over time to be America's greatest weapon in the war against terrorism. ◆

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Letter from Germany

They Still Don't Get It

Chancellor Schröder's election showed that Germans, and other Europeans, don't understand how much the world has changed since 9/11.

by **Peter Ross Range**

The main thing to take from Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's success in playing the Iraq card in September's German election is that the Germans, and most Europeans, still don't get the post-9/11 world. They did not experience the transformative moment that so profoundly changed America. And, absent an attack on their own soil, they're not likely to share America's fundamentally altered notion of national security any time soon.

Most Europeans, and Germans in particular, still see the world through a pre-9/11 lens. That's why Schröder's populist message—a brilliant, if cynical, political ploy—so easily took Germans back to their habitual post-World War II pacifism. Schröder's anti-war mantra reawakened a deeply ingrained sentiment that had been more or less repressed during successively deeper German engagements in Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Djibouti, and Afghanistan. Those steps were all decisions of the political elite, taken through the Bundestag and the German Constitutional Court. In the election, for the first time in 10 years, the question of whether Germany should participate in an overseas military mission was put to the people—this was Schröder's canny political instinct—and the people said no.

It remains to be seen whether Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer—who had deftly coaxed Germany, especially its left wing, into gradually accepting engagement in places like Kosovo and Afghanistan—can lead the way back to a "normalized" German involvement in the world. "We've been set back at least to 1997," said Bernhard May of Germany's Council on Foreign Relations. That means pre-Kosovo.

While Germans understand the necessity of combating terrorism, and gradually came to accept the mini-war in Afghanistan (for which Schröder courageously put his government on the line), they still don't see the world as a radically changed place. They cannot, for instance, grasp the Hitler appeasement analogy for Iraq, though Germans should understand it better than any people other than Jews. Americans perceive themselves to be at war. Germans see the war as something that may still come, and they want to avoid it at almost any cost. "To us, war means Dresden," one Greens Party politician told me. (He was born long after the firebombing of Dresden.) In Germany, that trumps any further discussion.

It's important to remember that Germans, like most Europeans, have no worldwide foreign policy. They have some global aspirations, such as permanent membership

NO NEW WAR: German demonstrators march with posters reading, "No blood for oil," and, "War monger not wanted." Chancellor Schröder's anti-war-in-Iraq stance revived German pacifism and left-wing anti-Americanism.

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on the U.N. Security Council, but they have no global vision. Instead, they have interests, they have relationships, and they have a strong notion of process—of *how* nations should ideally relate to one another (mainly through international institutions). But they have little developed sense of power and its uses, except to channel it into the kind of entangling alliances like NATO and the European Union that keep countries like Germany from going solo in times of crisis. They've studiously, even obsessively, avoided reaching beyond German borders with anything like advice.

"We have no real view of what should happen in the world," says Christoph Bertram, director of Germany's Institute for International and Security Affairs. "We have ideas, but no clear notion of what we ourselves would do, of how to translate the ideas into policy. We have a functioning decision-making system on things like tariffs, but not in the use of power."

One way to know that Germans still don't get 9/11 is that they often couch their opposition to firm action in Iraq in terms that are more anti-Bush than anti-American. During a long string of conversations in Berlin at election time, my interlocutors always veered quickly from Iraq into a string of Bush administration decisions that they hate: rejection of the Kyoto Protocol, U.S. withdrawal from the International Criminal Court, last year's new steel tariffs. Sometimes they mention the Bush administration's desire to drill for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and open up public lands to more logging. The German elites are also mad at us for having the death penalty, right-wing religious nuts, too many McDonald's, and a rotten sense of culture. All these amount to a generalized antipathy for the United States that was ripe for exploiting in a close political campaign.

But what does any of this have to do with going to war against Saddam Hussein? The answer is nothing. Yet the Germans seem unable to distinguish between objectionable environmental and trade policies and desirable security policies. They bundle them all together, and seem to give them equal weight. Americans can disagree with Bush on the ICC and Kyoto but still support him in the essential goal of regime change in Iraq, as Bill Clinton did in his speech to Tony Blair's Labour Party in October in Blackpool, England. Democrats who are often distressed with Mr. Bush's swagger and cowboy language can still separate style from policy.

In Berlin, I often asked Germans how they would feel about Iraq if the president were named Clinton or Gore, and had supported Kyoto and the ICC, but still had the same Iraq policy as Bush. Almost all said: "Oh, that would be different." They've confused the messenger with the message; their problem is Bush, when it should be Saddam Hussein.

Despite their preoccupation with Bush, it is nonetheless true that there's latent anti-Americanism in the German body politic. Its most explicit form is the reflexive rejection by the left of certain American values, economic realities, and lifestyle preferences—which they derisively label "American conditions," now a negative political code word in Germany.

Yet clearly Germans are conflicted about the United States. From the news bureaus of Unter den Linden to the private dining room of Schröder's Chancellery, I repeatedly heard: "We have an ambivalent relationship with America." Germans have long been America's biggest fans in Europe. They send their children to our universities and put in for postings in the United States. But at the same time, one hears words like inferiority complex, fear of dominance, and the complaint of not being consulted in matters of war and peace.

The lack of nuance in the German perception of U.S. policies is sometimes breathtaking. One of the more preposterous arguments I heard came from a top Schröder advisor during the chancellor's election night party on Sept. 22. "You don't just go roaring into a war you haven't thought about," he said, clearly unacquainted with the debate raging for months in the United States. "And besides, Baghdad is not so far away from us." Right: only about 2,000 miles and light years of involvement.

Americans **perceive** themselves to be at war. Germans see the **war** as something that may still come, and they want to **avoid** it at almost any cost.

Such misperceptions are driving a wedge between the United States and its friends in Europe. Our relationships with them are fundamentally shifting, and will probably never be quite the same again. We must hope that the Germans someday grasp the fact that just as Dresden was a defining moment for them—130,000 people killed in a single night's bombing—the 9/11 attacks have become one for us. One can only hope it won't take another Dresden—or a Paris or Berlin terrorist catastrophe—to achieve that understanding. ◆

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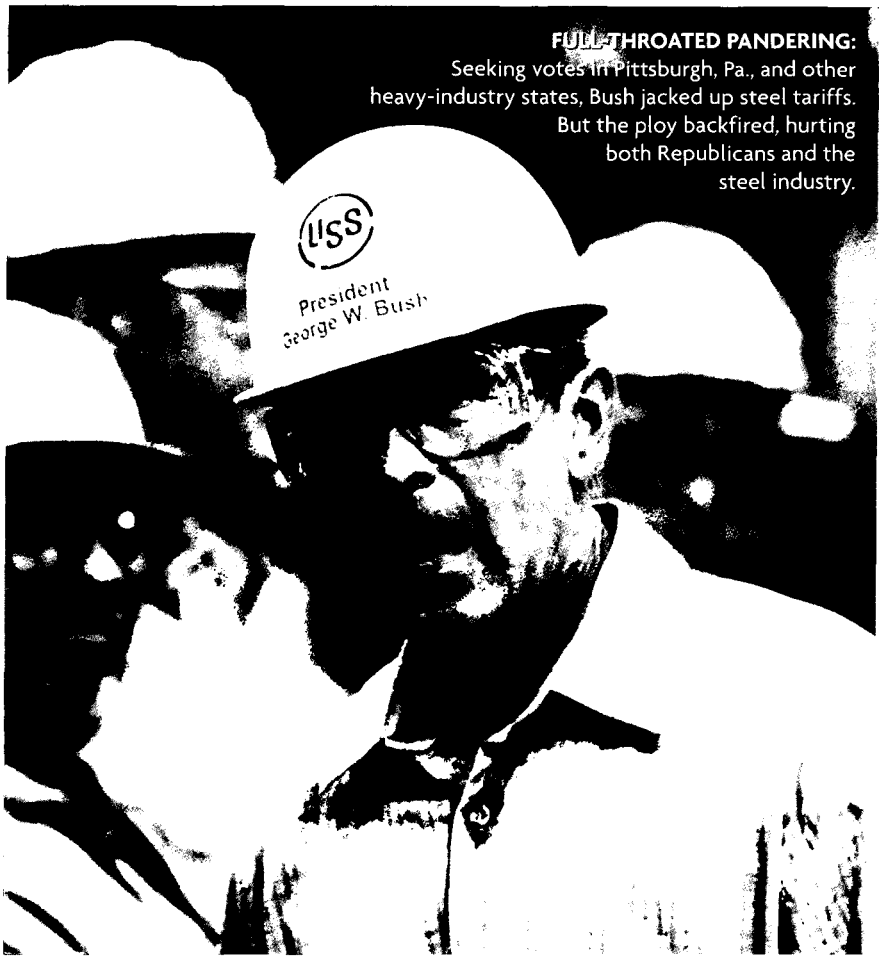
Bad policies make bad politics

Lessons from the Bush administration's klutzy foray into steel protectionism.



FULL-THROATED PANDERING: Seeking votes in Pittsburgh, Pa., and other heavy-industry states, Bush jacked up steel tariffs. But the ploy backfired, hurting both Republicans and the steel industry.

> *by* **Ed Gresser**

Is trade protection good policy? Most economists say no. For the economy as a whole, it raises costs and reduces competitiveness.

Is it good politics? A lot of smart political consultants might say yes. But the Bush administration's misadventure in steel, backfiring loudly at home and abroad, offers grounds to believe that bad economic policy is also bad politics.

The administration's steel policy took shape in the summer of 2001, when at the urging of steel lobbyists, it filed a petition for "emergency import relief" with the International Trade Commission. The consequence, in March 2002, was a series of 8 percent to 30 percent tariffs on about 13 million tons of the imported steel used in cars, appliances, and construction projects.

Bush political strategists saw the decision as a triumph. Deriding President Clinton for rejecting similar industry demands in the 1990s for protection, they felt the tariffs would help pick up votes at the margins in closely divided states with long steel industry histories such as Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Illinois. But in view of the 2002 election results, it's clear that they made a bad call.

To begin with, President Bush—an enthusiastic advocate for tariff reduction in other countries—made himself look unprincipled by imposing tariffs at home. More recently, as pressure from angry foreign governments and unhappy domestic manufacturers forced him to withdraw the tariffs on three of the original 13 million tons of steel, his administration came to look weak as well. Nor has the policy brought much short-term political benefit, as Democratic gubernatorial candidates like Ed Rendell (Pa.), Jennifer Granholm (Mich.), and Rod Blagojevich (Ill.) ended a decade of Republican control in the industrial states.

Unintended consequences. How did it go so wrong? The explanation lies in the realities of economics and foreign policy.

The economic part is simple; tariffs are like other taxes. When they go up, somebody has to pay, and whoever pays often gets mad. Just as low-income Americans lose money when they buy high-tariff products like sneakers, manufacturers lose customers and competitiveness when the government puts a 30 percent tax on the steel they need.

The experience of Lester Trilla, president of Trilla Steel Drum Corp., a small Chicago company that makes steel drums for packaging, waste disposal, and other uses, shows this chain of events in real life.

"The price of the domestic steel that we now must buy has increased by over 54 percent since the imposition of the steel tariffs," Trilla told the House Small Business Committee in July. "Our customers are starting to look for lower-cost plastic and bulk packaging. More sig-

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nificantly, if this situation continues for any length of time, some of our larger customers will choose to fill drums overseas. This would ... dramatically reduce production and jobs at Trilla and other American drum manufacturers."

Over time, these effects of the tariff policy are likely to rebound against the steel industry itself. Companies like Trilla's will conclude that steel is an unreliable material prone to sudden supply interruptions and price increases. Those that can do so will switch out of steel to other materials—plastic barrels instead of metal, aluminum parts for autos, composite materials for appliances and construction. Over time, the tariffs are likely to leave the steel industry with a smaller market and less ability to be profitable over the long run.

The political part is equally simple: Foreigners can strike back. In the weeks after the tariffs went into effect, the European Union, whose exports were hit hardest, threatened to retaliate with its own tariffs on American orange juice, Harley-Davidson motorcycles, and other high-profile exports. So for each happy steel magnate, the tariffs were suddenly producing 10 angry Florida orange growers and Wisconsin motorcycle workers. The threats to orange juice produced in Gov. Jeb Bush's home state had a sting all the way to the White House. When President Bush met with EU President Romano Prodi last July, he demanded, "Why are you going after my family?"

Boomerang effect. The EU's response is just the beginning. Brazil, China, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Norway, and Switzerland have all joined the EU in protesting the steel tariffs through formal dispute proceedings at the World Trade Organization, meaning that retaliation like Europe's is now approaching from the far shores of the Pacific and the Caribbean, as well as the Atlantic. These countries are the market for well over $200 billion worth of U.S.-produced exports, supporting perhaps 2.5 million American jobs. Should the complainants win, each country could choose its own retaliatory targets from a list that includes airplanes, corn, soybeans, semiconductors, cars, and more.

So, although they pleased the steel industry, the steel tariffs boomeranged against a long list of small manufacturers and put a much larger group of American exporters at risk. The targets don't much like it, and there are many more of them than there are steel companies. No surprise that the tariffs seem to be a political loser.

Protection policies are easy and popular in theory. But in practice, they are very hard to implement without hurting more people than they help. Today, Clinton's approach looks all the wiser, *and* all the smarter. ◆

Ladders to success

Union and industry-based skills training can lift wages for the working poor.

by **Michael Bernick**

The "working poor"—Americans working in low-wage jobs—increasingly have been the subject of study by America's labor experts. Most agree that one key to helping the working poor raise their incomes is by improving skills through a "career ladders" program. But experience indicates that mobility for the low-wage work force does not lie only in government-sponsored training accounts or vouchers for low-wage workers. Even among the workers who gain additional skills, only a minority will command higher wages. The great majority of low-wage workers will be unaffected.

Mobility for low-wage workers lies instead in skills-upgrading projects that are industry-based and influence the structure of jobs, not merely the skills of workers. Such projects are developed primarily by industry associations and labor unions. These projects institutionalize training so that entry-level workers are seen as important parts of a profession—not as an unstable, transitory workforce. Not only are internal job ladders strengthened, but more important, new, intermediate job categories—with increased responsibility and pay—are created.

Over the past three and a half years, California's government, under Gov. Gray Davis, has launched a network of skills-upgrading programs for the low-wage workforce that has closely linked skills increases for low-wage workers with job placements and new job ladders. The program includes participation by community colleges and career ladders projects for the health workforce. Its centerpiece is the $15 million Career Ladders for the 21st Century project of the state's Employment Training Panel. Long-term health care and hotel services are two of the participating industries.

In long-term health care (skilled nursing facilities and assisted living facilities), the California Association of Health Facilities (CAHF), an industry association of more than 1,500 nursing homes, has taken the lead in skills training and job mobility for the industry's lower-wage certified nurse assistants (CNA). The CNA is the industry's main direct-care position—responsible for the bathing, dressing,

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Ladders to success

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feeding, and personal care needs of patients. In 2000, more than 72,000 CNAs were employed in California nursing homes, earning an average hourly wage of slightly over $9.

Using the community college system in some locations and private training providers in others, CAHF has launched a series of projects with its employer members throughout California to train and place CNAs as licensed vocational nurses (LVN)—an advanced position, paying $16 to $18 per hour. The projects involve different forms of employer participation—including the underwriting by employers of part of CNA wages during training. All of the projects involve a mix of classroom and on-the-job training, instruction coordinated with work time, and placement as an LVN upon completion of training.

MOVING UP: Nurses' assistants in California can train to become licensed vocational nurses.

More important, CAHF and its member organizations have created several new job ladders for the CNAs: senior nurse assistant, restorative nurse assistant, and certified memory impairment specialist. These intermediate job categories, between CNA and LVN, involve 40 hours to 80 hours of structured training, with greater responsibility and immediate pay increases, starting at 75 cents to $1.25 per hour. Additional job categories being developed, such as geriatric nurse candidate, mean more training (200 hours) and higher pay.

Cross-training. The long-term care industry is largely nonunion. But in the more unionized acute care settings, the unions, particularly Service Employees International Union Local 250 in Northern California, have joined with large employers, such as Kaiser, on Career Ladders. The first projects focus on lower-wage workers in laundry, housekeeping, and food preparation and train these workers for the paraprofessional positions of acute care nurse assistant, unit assistant, and medical assistant.

For the hospitality industry, employing around 200,000 workers, Career Ladders has set out to increase mobility through several changes in low-wage jobs: cross-training to increase hours and moves between divisions of a hotel; new emphasis among hotel management to promote from within; and preparation in customer service, communication skills, and some hotel technical skills so a worker is ready when a job opens. The large hotels are like little cities, with several major divisions: housekeeping, food and beverage, front desk, and sales. There are many mobility paths up a division and between divisions. At the same time, even the large hotels rarely have job openings at predictable times, so mobility often means being prepared for openings.

The California Association of Hotels and Motels, which represents around 2,000 properties (both union and nonunion), has launched a pilot mobility project with the Rim Corp., an operator of 22 California properties. Ninety Rim employees—primarily dishwashers, prep cooks in food and beverage, and front desk representatives—are given paid time off to take up to 64 hours of training. Courses include English as a second language, specific hotel skills (guest services, working a shift at the desk), and communications skills.

A more extensive Career Ladders program, involving hundreds of workers, is sponsored by the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE) union in Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, and San Jose. In San Jose, HERE Local 19 and the Fairmont Hotel are enrolling 200 front-line workers—front desk agents, restaurant servers, and laundry workers. Each worker will receive 200 hours of training to be chosen from a menu of classes in language, technical skills, and leadership skills. The Fairmont is invested in this work force and is assuming the costs of wages during training and guaranteeing at least a 5 percent pay raise within 90 days of training completion.

Additional Career Ladders efforts in California, aimed at influencing the structure of low-wage jobs, are being undertaken in other fields, ranging from child care to banking to restaurants. In some areas, such as in-home health care and child care, Gov. Davis has directly increased wages of low-wage workers by increasing the wage reimbursement levels that state government pays to employers.

The theme throughout all of these efforts is the professionalization of the low-wage work force. Though one aim is to improve the economic position of this group, an equal goal is to improve the quality of service provided in health care, hotels, banks, and other settings. ◆

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Clear skies, cloudy climate

Bush's plan to reduce greenhouse gases leaves out the worst pollutant, carbon dioxide. Senator Carper has a better alternative.

> *by* **Roger Ballentine** *and* **Jan Mazurek**

Given President Bush's persistent unwillingness to tackle the problem of global warming, it falls to Congress to find ways to address the looming threat. One key area where congressional action could be effective is through new strategies to reduce carbon dioxide (CO_2) and other gases that contribute to global warming. Fortunately, one vehicle already exists that could dramatically lower the CO_2 emissions that are created by generating electric power. It's a bill introduced this fall by Sen. Tom Carper (D-Del.), co-sponsored by Sen. Lincoln Chafee (R-R.I.), and patterned in part on a Progressive Policy Institute proposal.

Carper's legislation, the Clean Air Planning Act of 2002, would limit carbon dioxide emissions from electric generators, which account for 40 percent of the country's CO_2 emissions. It's a far more effective approach than that proposed by President Bush. The White House-proposed legislation pointedly omits CO_2 from the mix of gases it would reduce. By leaving out CO_2, Bush's so-called "Clear Skies" legislation is both a step backward on global warming and a disservice to the very energy companies it is designed to appease. Introduced last summer by Sen. Bob Smith (R-N.H.) and expected to be reintroduced in the 108th Congress, the proposal aims to reduce power plant emissions of three key gases: nitrogen oxide, which produces smog; sulfur dioxide, the source of acid rain; and mercury. Because it goes after three pollutants, this approach is called "3P." But at the urging of Vice President Cheney and other Republican ideologues, the president's proposal excludes the fourth and arguably the most important "P"—CO_2, the greenhouse gas predominantly responsible for global climate change.

Man-made carbon dioxide comes overwhelmingly from two sources: power plants and automobiles. When automobiles are combined with trucks and airplanes, the transportation sector accounts for roughly one-third of the country's CO_2 emissions. Those emissions are not addressed by Carper's legislation. And earlier this year, the Senate failed to tighten fuel economy standards that would have curbed tailpipe emissions of carbon dioxide and other pollutants. But in July, California, whose residents buy 10 percent of all new cars sold in America, responded to Congress' failure by passing historic legislation that requires auto manufacturers to reduce emissions of CO_2 from cars. California's leadership may trigger a cascade of other legislation regulating vehicle emissions. But when it comes to power plants, no single state, even one as big as California, can fill the federal leadership vacuum.

That's why Carper's alternative to the White House 3P approach is such a promising start. From a political point of view, the bill is a "doable" compromise because it's bipartisan and because it combines strong legal sanctions for failure to reduce emissions with market-based mechanisms for achieving them.

In contrast, the president's Clear Skies initiative would actually increase global warming pollutants. The only effective way to curb CO_2 emissions from power plants is to burn less carbon-laden fuel, for example, by switching from coal to natural gas, or by improving plant efficiency. Such measures also reduce 3P emissions. In contrast, the "end-of-pipe" technology used to control the 3Ps—essentially fancy smokestack filters—reduce power-plant efficiency and thus require plants to burn more fuel and release more carbon dioxide. Such controls are also costly. Thus 3P technology has the perverse effect of keeping older, dirtier plants in operation while plant owners seek to recover their anti-pollution costs.

Ironically, some existing regulatory requirements also help to keep polluting plants running. The poster child is the controversial New Source Review (NSR) regulation, a favorite of the environmental community and the subject of a war of words between the Senate and the White House, which wants to roll it back. The only thing worse than extending the life of a dirty plant with end-of-pipe controls is extending its life without them. That's why NSR requires companies to undergo lengthy permit review and make costly end-of-pipe upgrades when they expand or modernize old plants. NSR is classic "command and control" environmental regulation, where the government not only says what needs to be done but also how to do it. Industry hates it because it involves the government in its operating decisions. Environmentalists swear by it because industry seems intent on doing whatever it takes to keep these superannuated plants running forever.

While it is imperative that Congress preserve the mission of federal clean air statutes that legislators created in the late 1960s, a well-designed "4P" law that includes CO_2 as the fourth "P" could help make NSR unnecessary. The government would set mandatory emissions limits with severe penalties for noncompliance for all four pollutants. Then it would simply let plant operators, rather than the govern-

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Filling the fat pipes

Congress should help stimulate demand for high-speed Internet access.

by **Shane Ham** *and* **Robert D. Atkinson**

Of all the missed opportunities of the New Economy, none is more disappointing than the slow adoption rate of broadband Internet connections in the home. Missing out on broadband means missing out on the power of the Internet. High-speed, always-on connections do more than reduce the infamous waiting associated with surfing the World Wide Web. Widespread broadband in the home unlocks some of the greatest potential of the Internet as a communications and productivity tool. The economic impact of ubiquitous broadband is estimated to be in the hundreds of billions of dollars, and the cultural impact can be just as great: Broadband can fulfill the Internet's promise to transform the way we work, learn, and live.

So far the debate over broadband policy has focused on availability of broadband services. But the statistics suggest that the real problem is low demand for those services: Seven out of 10 American homes have access to at least one kind of broadband service, such as cable or DSL, but only 20 percent of those actually subscribe. The rest simply don't believe the cost is justified by the Internet uses currently available to broadband subscribers. To accelerate the adoption of broadband, therefore, we should also work to increase the usefulness of high-speed Internet connections.

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Of course, stimulating demand is not as easy as it sounds. Developing applications and services for broadband requires heavy capital investment aimed at a customer base that is currently quite small. Moreover, the usefulness of many broadband applications, such as videoconferencing, depends heavily on who else in the user's universe also has the connection—having it is useless if nobody else has it. (The same problem applied to the early adoption of fax machines.) Finally, many of the most useful applications will require "fat" broadband connections, with higher data speeds than are now available in a typical cable or DSL connection.

This creates a chicken-or-egg dilemma, and while the market will lead the deployment of broadband service, there is plenty that government can do to resolve the impasse. An omnibus broadband demand agenda would focus on several key goals.

HO HUM: Until the government paves the way for better online applications, consumers won't shell out for faster connections.

Encourage Internet usage generally. More than 40 percent of Americans still have no Internet connection at all; many of these non-users feel the Internet is either unsafe or not very useful. Both these problems should be aggressively attacked by governments at all levels.

With respect to safety, Congress should pass appropriate legislation to protect the privacy of Internet users. With a baseline set of protections and a chance to "opt out" of uses of their personal data that they don't like, people will feel much more confident about using the Internet. Congress should also encourage the development of tools that empower users to protect themselves, such as the Platform for Privacy Preferences Project, or P3P, which allows users to create customized privacy settings in their browser software. So does the Internet Content Rating Association, or ICRA, which allows users to block web sites with sexual, racist, or violent content.

Perhaps most important, Congress should pass legislation requiring the labeling of unsolicited commercial e-mail, or spam. The increasing flood of spam into email in-boxes, particularly spam promoting illegal schemes or sexually explicit content, has been a major impediment to increased Internet usage. Labeling requirements would let users send unwanted spam straight to the trash folder.

Governments at all levels can also work to make the Internet more useful in a number of ways. First, more government transactions should be brought online. There are numerous efficiencies to be gained from automating government services—from voting to renewing hunting licenses—while simultaneously making the online environment more useful to

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citizens. States should follow the lead of the federal government in developing legislation promoting more online government services, such as that proposed by Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.) and Rep. Jim Turner (D-Texas). Governments can also help ensure that users directly benefit from the economic savings of Internet usage by discouraging middleman protectionism. For example, a number of states have passed laws that effectively prohibit online sales of products ranging from cars to caskets to contact lenses, even though buying online can mean considerable savings for consumers. Most of these laws are designed to protect the politically connected offline retailers (such as wine stores or auto dealers) at the expense of online consumers, and should be eliminated.

Encourage digital content. Music, movies, books, television programs, video games, and other content are widely expected to be the "killer app" for broadband—the main reason users will want the service. Many content providers are reluctant to distribute their products online, however, for fear of piracy (think Napster and its clones) or of alienating their traditional retail and promotion channels (the brick -and-mortar stores selling records, books, and videos). Ongoing fights over royalty payments by Internet radio stations and "digital rights management" to protect content from piracy are slowing the deployment of the content most likely to stimulate broadband demand.

But government can act to break this logjam. Congress should appropriate funds to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for a "pump priming" project that would lead the way for distribution of PBS programming over the Internet as well as over the air—a comprehensive webcasting system. Congress should also encourage digital distribution of education content by funding online museums, including a national online science museum, and by making curriculum materials more readily available online. At the same time, Congress ought to establish a National Digital Lending Library that purchases licensed digital copies of books and periodicals and lends them out one at a time to citizens with digital library cards issued by local libraries. These electronic books would contain digital rights management tools to prevent unauthorized duplication—one borrower at a time—and ensure an on-time "return" to the library by becoming unreadable on the due date, unless properly renewed.

Encourage transformative applications. The greatest benefits of broadband connections in the home will come from transforming the way we work, learn, and live. Telecommuting, for example, can boost both productivity and quality of life by taking workers out of rush-hour traffic. Distance learning initiatives can bring the nation's best teachers into the home and facilitate the lifelong learning and skills training necessary for workers to prosper in the New Economy. Most important, telemedicine can enable our aging population to live independently at home under the constant care and supervision of trained health personnel.

These new applications are being held back by laws and programs designed for the last century. Tax laws encourage businesses to buy equipment for their offices but penalize them for equipping their workers' homes for telecommuting. Rules requiring students to spend a certain number of hours "in seat" to qualify for financial aid promote classroom presence over online learning. The Medicare payment structure encourages long-term care at nursing homes and other facilities because no payments are made for services rendered in the home. These rules need to be revised to account for new technology and what eventually will become an entirely new way of doing things.

By taking these steps to stimulate demand for broadband connections in the home, policymakers at all levels can tip the cost-benefit factor for consumers in favor of broadband adoption and help telecommunications companies recoup their investments in bandwidth capacity. Once the broadband ball is rolling, the next wave of the New Economy will not be far behind. ◆

Clear skies

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ment, decide what strategy to use to meet them, whether through fuel switching, efficiency improvements, or other techniques. To meet the carbon targets, industry would probably retire older plants or switch to cleaner fuels. In this way, firms would invest in fewer end-of-pipe controls, and investments would be spurred in new plants and cleaner fuels that would reduce all four pollutants. In contrast, the Bush administration's plan—a combination of Clear Skies legislation and a rollback of NSR—is a perfect formula for the worst result: more global warming and less government oversight.

In addition to being bad for the environment, Clear Skies also is just plain bad for the power business. A 3P approach tells industry to invest in more end-of-pipe controls and to construct plants without regard to carbon output. And it does so at a time when all but the most cynical of power producers recognize that tough measures to combat climate change are inevitable—five, 10, or 15 years down the road. When the political will coalesces to control carbon, industry will then be required to spend a lot more to rebuild the expensive plants they constructed under the old rules than they would have spent had we adopted a tough but realistic 4P law in the first place. This is why some power companies have broken ranks with the industry party line on carbon and now support 4P legislation.

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So what should be done? The president should put Clear Skies in the trash heap. Industry and the environmental community should abandon old grudges, old ideas, and extreme positions and convene in a spirit of compromise. With or without the president's help, Congress should pass a strong but fair four-pollutant bill that will be a victory for environmentalists, for industry, and for the climate. Senator Carper's Clean Air Planning Act is a promising start. ◆

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The party that didn't bark

Two years of one-party rule won't be good for the country—or as good for President Bush and the Republicans as their post-election celebrations suggest. But as much as it hurts right now, the pasting Democrats took in the midterm elections could prove to be a blessing in disguise for the party. If Democrats learn the right lessons from defeat—admittedly a big "if"—their party and the country will be better for it down the road.

Democrats are always good at making excuses, and as usual, have plenty. Since 9/11, President Bush has remained far more popular with the American people than his policies merit. It's not easy making inroads in a time of war against a popular president and a politically savvy White House. This election was fought on their turf and their terms.

But let's face it: The past two years have been the worst period for Democrats in at least two decades. The midterm report card on the party is grim: For two years now, Democrats have had too little to say and been too timid to say it.

That is not an ideological statement, nor an attempt to point fingers. Centrist Democrats who hid behind the president's tax cut are as guilty as traditional Democrats who hid behind the same Social Security attack ads they've been running for 20 years. Democratic candidates forgot the cardinal rule of American politics: You can't win an argument unless you make one.

This isn't the first time Democrats have hit the hustings, only to discover they had nothing to offer. In 1988, the epitaph on the Dukakis presidential campaign was: "Don't just stand there—say something!" In the run-up to the 1994 midterm elections, congressional leaders and Democratic strategists made a fateful decision to attack Newt Gingrich's Contract with America, rather than to offer an alternative reform vision.

Shortly after the 1994 election debacle, President Clinton told me, "The voters handed us a good country licking. They were sending us a message to get done what we promised." The next two years were the most successful of his presidency, because he resolved to make a clear case for progress to the American people, not simply mind-meld with the Democratic caucus in Congress. The strength of his ideas enabled Clinton to help his party climb out of a much deeper hole than the one it's in now.

The question for 2004 is whether the party will learn its lesson again. Democrats have better approaches on economic growth, expanding opportunity, and keeping the country safe. But for the second straight election, they made the case *against* the GOP plan instead of *for* their own—and as a result did worse than the mood of the country would indicate. For voters, the choice in this election was thin gruel: Democrats attacked the Republican agenda; Bush attacked Democrats for blocking it.

The party's problem on Election Day wasn't ideology; it was ideas. Democrats couldn't make an issue of the faltering economy because the party didn't even try to put forward a coherent plan for economic growth. They couldn't make the president's tax cut an issue because they didn't get behind any approach that could beat it—such as postponing tax cuts for the rich to pay for tax cuts for the middle class.

No wonder Democratic issues never caught on. The corporate scandals faded because most Democrats had nothing more they wanted to do about corporate responsibility and were too afraid to take on corporate welfare. Instead of outlining their own comprehensive plan to make America more secure at the front lines, Democrats walked into Bush's trap on homeland security—a phony debate over the makeup of a department that won't solve the problem anyway.

For all the talk of a mandate, President Bush has no agenda for middle-class Americans. Democrats do: making America safe again by shaking up the intelligence bureaucracy and beefing up local law enforcement; cutting taxes to expand opportunity instead of privilege; demanding more from teachers and rewarding them for it; giving young people the chance to earn their way through college; cutting health care costs for workers and small businesses; giving parents more choices so they can balance work and family; giving America more control of its destiny with an energy plan to develop a 50-mpg SUV.

Democrats had, and still have, a winning case to make. It's not better tactics, stronger turnout, or, please God, tougher attack ads. It's not rushing out to reopen all the doubts Democrats worked so hard to put behind them in the '90s. All Democrats have to do is let the country know how much they can get done, instead of how much they'll stop. That will surprise everyone—and it just might be enough to win. ◆

Bruce Reed is president of the Democratic Leadership Council and was President Clinton's domestic policy adviser.

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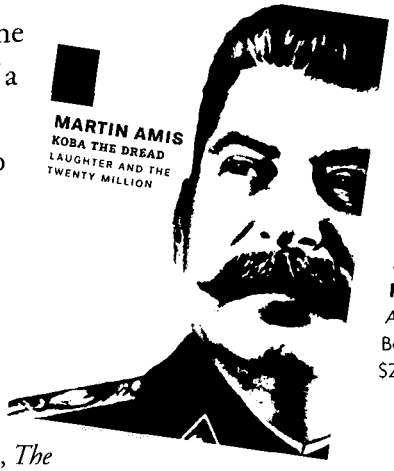
Sympathy for the devil

by **Fred Siegel** || "Death," explained Stalin in his favorite aphorism, "solves all problems. No man, no problem." And while he said every death was a tragedy, he also insisted, "The death of a million is a mere statistic."

Stalin was following in the footsteps of his mentor, Lenin, who saw opportunity in the 1922 famine. Lenin wrote that "cannibalism" in the countryside and "roads littered with hundreds if not thousands of corpses" presented an opportunity to "execute" as many of the "reactionary bourgeoisie" as possible—and "the greater the number ... the better."



KOBA THE DREAD: Laughter and the Twenty Million • *by Martin Amis* • Talk Miramax Books • 306 pp. • $24.95

In *Koba the Dread: Laughter and the Twenty Million*—Koba was Stalin's *nom de guerre*—Martin Amis, the well-known British novelist, asks the British left to reconsider its asymmetrical position toward Stalin and Hitler: There can be no compromise with Nazism, but communism still elicits a measure of sympathy, if not support.

"Everybody knows of Auschwitz and Belsen," he complains. "Nobody knows of Vorkuta and Solovetsky. Everybody knows of Himmler and Eichmann," but "nobody knows of Yezhov and Dzerzhinsky." "Everybody knows of the six million of the Holocaust. Nobody knows of the six million of the Terror-Famine" not to mention the 20 million killed by Soviet communism.

It's an issue with enormous implications for the present. And here I refer not to the special room Saddam Hussein has dedicated solely to books on Stalin, who is one of his heroes, but to the role of the British left in the debate over Iraq. The ever-articulate British Prime Minister Tony Blair is in the forefront of the fight to confront Iraq, but many in his Labour Party are far angrier with what they see as American "militarism" than they are with Saddam. In a party where major splits have come over foreign, not domestic, issues, such as World War I, Korea, and nuclear weapons, Blair is confronted with more than a dozen cabinet ministers who have come out of the unreconstructed left.

Their intellectual magazine, *The London Review of Books*, still runs articles explaining how "we seem to need Lenin's insights more than ever ... because it is only by throwing off our attachment to liberal democracy that we can become effectively anti-capitalist." The author of those words, Slavoj Zizek, a regular contributor to the *London Review*, insists that "the ultimate and defining experience of the 20th century was the direct experience of the Real as distinct from everyday social reality—the Real, in its extreme violence, is the price to be paid for peeling off the deceiving layers of reality."

> "Martin Amis asks the British left to reconsider its asymmetrical position toward Stalin and Hitler: there can be no compromise with Nazism, but communism still elicits a measure of sympathy, if not support."

Amis, propelled by the shame of his father, the novelist Kingsley Amis, a member of the Communist Party in the 1930s, is at his best responding to the *London Review* types. Having read "several yards of books about the Soviet experiment," he provides a very readable summary of the crimes of Soviet communism. "The dictatorship of the proletariat was a lie; Union was a lie, and Soviet was a lie, and Socialist was a lie, and Republics was a lie. Comrade was a lie. The revolution was a lie." And as to the old left chestnut about how Stalin betrayed the promise of Bolshevism, he chortles, "Stalin was Lenin's industrious, underbred mascot, his shaggy dog."

For Amis, the 20 million seals the question of communist evil and makes it clear that Stalin, "the big mustache," and Hitler, "the little mustache," were fraternal twins. But for those on the British left who think criticizing communism is "Red-baiting," a betrayal of friends or relatives, there is still either a lingering affection for Bolshevism or a studied inability to confront the facts. Amis tries to address the asymmetry in an opening and closing memoir that is uneasily wrapped around the body of the book.

Intensely personal, the memoir deals with the author's relationship with his father, who in the 1950s became anti-communist, and with his friend Christopher Hitchens, whom he accuses of unrecanted admiration for Lenin and

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The Court runs amok

by **Simon Lazarus** || In December 1998, with the demise of Newt Gingrich's Contract with America, Edward H. Crane, president of the Cato Institute, glumly concluded that Congress remains an "unconstrained engine for government growth," regardless of which party is in power. Crane suggested a solution: Bring on the Supreme Court. "Constitutional constraints," he wrote, "are the only hope we have for limiting the federal government's power over ... virtually every aspect of our lives, from education to health care to our retirement."

Four years later, John T. Noonan, senior judge on the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, has published a remarkable tract, contending, in effect, that Crane's "only hope" for curbing federal power may turn out to be something more than empty bravado. Noonan is a Reagan administration appointee with impeccable scholarly and conservative credentials. His book, *Narrowing the Nation's Power: The Supreme Court Sides with the States*, describes how the court's current 5-4 conservative majority (Justices Scalia, Thomas, Rehnquist, Kennedy, and O'Connor) has reached so far to constrain national legislative authority that it is fair to say these five justices have "return[ed] the country to a pre-Civil War understanding of the nation."

NARROWING THE NATION'S POWER: The Supreme Court Sides with the States • *by John T. Noonan Jr.* • University of California Press • 193 pp. • $24.95

Noonan pictures the majority's new regime as comparable to early 20th-century decisions that interposed the Constitution as a rigid barrier to social and economic legislation. Most significantly, he sees the court majority as potentially a formidable political rival of Congress. When the authors of the Federalist Papers described the Supreme Court as the "least dangerous" of the three federal branches, Noonan observes, they did not "foresee a court with an agenda." And they did not appreciate that "in our democracy, a small band, entrenched by position," could be well-positioned to overcome fragmented, irresolute opposition from Capitol Hill.

So far, the results of individual federalism decisions have avoided significant damage to programs important to centrist constituencies. But if the Supreme Court stays on its present course, that will change—and soon. One such change is expected to occur during the court's current term: It will almost certainly hold that the 4.5 million Americans employed by state governments cannot sue to enforce their rights under the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act, which was and remains one of President Clinton's most popular achievements.

Numerous law review articles have pointed out the far-reaching potential of the new jurisprudence. But to date these alarums have gone largely unnoticed outside of academia. Judge Noonan's book is intended to fill this gap. His refreshingly concise argument avoids lawyerly jargon and highlights material points with telling revelations. For instance, the Supreme Court majority's oft-repeated mantra that the "states entered the union with their sovereignty intact" has no basis in the text or history of the Constitution, before or after 1789. It is in fact reflected in only one historically significant document—the Constitution of the Confederate States of America.

Also, the majority's strictures could subordinate Congress to micromanagement by hundreds of federal district and circuit courts, immersing life-tenured judges in waters they have neither the experience nor the democratic legitimacy to navigate. Noonan writes that when the Supreme Court in 2000 barred state employees from enforcing their rights under the Federal Age Discrimination in Employment Act, it "judged the possible inconsequentialness of forced retirement with the serenity of observers who would never undergo it."

The most potent weapon Noonan brings to the incipient federalism debate is his across-the-board credibility. His scholarship provokes extravagant praise from conservatives like Judge Richard Posner and liberals like former ACLU President Norman Dorsen. Before ascending the federal bench, he was a leading academic critic of *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 Supreme Court decision invalidating state abortion bans. His appearance among the Supreme Court majority's critics underscores how sharply current judicial conservatives—including some of President Bush's most prominent nominees—have broken with traditional conservatives' emphasis on judicial restraint and deference to Congress.

This new activism threatens not only top-down, Washington-centric New Deal-type programs, but also contemporary centrist initiatives that deploy federal funds and impose federal standards to remedy chronic local government shortcomings. The majority's expansive concept of state "sovereign" immunity from private lawsuits, on which Noonan focuses his critique, is actually one component of a broader vision—an asserted "first principle" that the Constitution flatly bars federal intervention in "inherently local" subject-matter areas. As Chief Justice Rehnquist

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wrote in the bellwether 1995 case *Lopez v. United States*—which struck down the Gun-Free School Zones Act—these are areas over which the states "historically have been sovereign" and which, therefore, "the States may regulate but Congress may not." The Supreme Court majority repeatedly defines such off-limits areas to include education, law enforcement, and family policy—all targets for broadly popular contemporary reform efforts. A prominent example is the national testing regime at the heart of President Bush's 2001 No Child Left Behind legislation.

The majority has so far avoided direct threats to programs which, like No Child Left Behind, impose federal standards on areas of traditionally "local" responsibility. Such programs are authorized by the Constitution's so-called spending clause. As construed by the Supreme Court at least since 1937, this provision gives Congress broad discretion to attach regulatory strings to federal dollars dispatched to state and local governments. This authority is the basis for most federal standards that govern such areas as education, health, the environment, and anti-discrimination. But, as Noonan's analysis indicates, that authority could soon be at risk.

Noonan's book, in effect, raises the specter of an increasing fencing off of separate state and local realms. This would be especially likely if new activist conservatives get a firm grip on the federal judiciary. Established doctrinal bases for national legislative authority, the spending clause included, could shrink or vanish, taking existing programs and laws with them. Whether that explosive prospect comes to pass will depend significantly on whether centrists recognize their stake in the constitutional crisis illuminated by Judge Noonan. ●

Simon Lazarus is a lawyer and writer who served on President Jimmy Carter's White House Domestic Policy Staff.

STRESSED FRIENDSHIP: Martin Amis, left, accuses his old friend Christopher Hitchens, above, of unrecanted admiration for Lenin and Trotsky.

Sympathy for the devil

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Trotsky. Hitchens had drawn laughter—hence the subtitle *Laughter and the Twenty Million*—when, in addressing a London gathering, he had referred to a meeting with "old comrades." Both Martin Amis and his mentor in these matters, the great anti-communist historian Robert Conquest, had laughed as well. It was the laughter not of discomfort but of an inside joke—inconceivable had the reference been to an "old black shirt."

Admirable though the effort, Amis isn't equipped to handle the asymmetry, which requires a historical perspective. Part of the disparity is tied up in the events of the 1940s, when the communist anti-Fascist alliance with the West combined with the subsequent rise of McCarthyism to revalue the Soviet Union while devaluing the West. The upshot was the arguments among liberals and leftists for a moral equivalence between the West and the USSR. More important, however, is the continuity between socialism and communism. This has meant—particularly in Europe, where the recent prime ministers of Italy and France and the current foreign minister of Germany are all products of the 1960s far left—that there's been a vested interest in containing the criticism of communism, lest socialism in all its variations be implicated as well.

But there is also a new and decisive factor. In recent decades, the left, bereft of any working examples of a successful socialist society, has very effectively retreated to a negative argument. The best-known version is the mix of anti-Americanism and anti-globalism that leads left-wing Labourite backbenchers to brand the United States "a rogue nation" that is supposed to be systematically starving the people of Iraq. The outcome might be described as an anti-anti-Iraq argument, which, like the anti-anticommunism of old, is free to nitpick at the United States without having to defend an alternative.

Still, we shouldn't despair entirely. Consider the progress that's been made over the past 30 years. In the 1960s and 1970s, the left had a great deal of success comparing the United States with Nazi Germany. But after the fall of the Soviet Union, it was once again possible to compare the Nazis with their close cousins to the east. That's a small victory, but it's something Blair can use to fend off the know-nothings in his own party. ◆

Fred Siegel is culture editor of BLUEPRINT.

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Melting pot blues

Two ethnic films, "Barbershop" and "My Big Fat Greek Wedding," are paeans to vanishing subcultures. They also reverse the rules of minority inclusion.

NEO-ETHNIC SCHTICK: Nia Vardalos, left photo, stars in her own film as the mousy moussaka maid who wants to wed the bland Wasp. Ice Cube, right photo, gets guff for selling his barbershop to someone outside his tight-knit neighborhood community.

by **Harlan Jacobson** Usually by the time American filmmakers try to revere, preserve, and protect some quality or way of life, the tectonic plates of social change have already shifted. So it's interesting that two new controversial and popular films have addressed the preservation of ethnic and racial communities before they are erased by mainstream, American mass culture and economics. Nia Vardalos' "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" and Tim Story's "Barbershop" plead the by-now conventional wisdom that their respective communities be spared an unnoticed demise, or at least be praised before vanishing into middle class homogeneity.

What's notable about both films is that they turn certain rules of social inclusion on their heads. "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" is the brainchild of Vardalos, an ex-Second City Greek-American comedienne. She's the spiritual niece of John Belushi, but in this movie, she has the manners of a voyeur who stands outside her family's ethnic craziness, observing it. Vardalos wrote and performed "Wedding" as a play; it was seen by another Greek-American, Rita Wilson, actress-wife to Tom Hanks, who decided to produce it for HBO and signed on TV director Joel Zwick to direct. An American success story, but one that is far more than that of a simple entertainment box-office champ.

From day one, "Wedding" was dismissed as TV sitcom fluff at the same time that it seemed to captivate audiences, and a thousand theories have been offered in explanation. To reduce them to one overarching idea, the public was ready for a return to Basic Social Meatloaf. People wanted comediennes, not tragedians. This posits mass post-9/11 cultural fatigue with gender schizophrenia such as HBO's "Sex in the City" paradigm of upper-middle-class, sophisticated women in their 30s who whine for a living.

Vardalos, who doesn't whine, galumphs around as a self-effacing, mousy moussaka maid who just wants the 1930s dream of a nice guy who'll get her out of her parents' house, but pointedly not out of the neighborhood. As her suitor—the scion of a Wasp suburban family who falls under her unlikely spell—John Corbett reinvents William Holden, light on his feet, and lands like a cat.

The fact of the matter is that beneath the surface fluff, "Wedding's" true root is the civil rights films of the 1950s and 1960s. It's the grandchild of that genre, and, like all grandchildren, it reflects the way contemporary American film flips the old norms of social inclusion upside down. Instead of advocating that mainstream, white America makes room for an ethnic or religious minority—Jews

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in "Gentleman's Agreement," blacks in "To Kill A Mockingbird" and most pointedly in "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner"—now after two decades of multiculturalism the white guy in "Wedding" has to prove himself worthy of acceptance by an ethnic minority, Greek-Americans. To most of us, it's immensely satisfying that at the millennium, only a Martian would bring a bundt cake to a moussaka meal, as the good Wasps do in "Wedding." The irrelevance of mainstream culture sells the joke.

Like "Wedding," "Barbershop" is more complex beneath the surface, even while it behaves according to pretty predictable genre rules. It is set in Calvin's barbershop on the South Side of Chicago, one that's been in the family for three generations, and it's the film's conceit that Calvin's sale of the barbershop to an outsider constitutes a *post hoc* realization of community betrayal.

The film is the male version of the sociological salon film—à la "Fried Green Tomatoes"—heretofore mostly confined to women and the sad bond of sisterhood in a male world. When men have needed to bond in film, they have done so in action—in war, or in pursuit of the pennant, or in anti-hero mode, scampering along the margins in a doomed protest of the misapplication of imperial force. "Barbershop" is peopled by a raggedy cross-section of black American males, who fight and squawk, but who fundamentally like each other even though they don't yet know it. They're geezer-homeboys who seek and value sanctuary from what's wrong everywhere else in a place where on a hot summer night they can talk freely, openly, and honestly without the self-censorship of the norms set by the marketplace, the law, or family. And like "Wedding," "Barbershop" even has a white character, albeit as part of the ensemble rather than center-screen, who wants to be worthy of inclusion in the community.

Many reviews stress that the film is raucous, which is a bit of an overstatement, since most of the give-and-take is patter in amber, swipes across the social net that perhaps used to have edge but have been toned down for the market place. It's still immensely fun when it gets rolling and lets out some steam. There's probably no other culture in history where Ice Cube is the name of the actor who inhabits the central and conservative point of the activity of the drama, and a roustabout named Cedric the Entertainer takes on the joker role of Falstaff.

Rev. Jesse Jackson's complaint about the barbershop's disrespect for Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King is misguided but understandable. When political figures and editorial writers regard history, it is as fact that leads to myth; when artists do it, it's as myth that leads to counter-myth. Civic duty calls us to remember profiles in courage; art's proper role is to humanize by satire. Rev. Jackson's complaint would simply fall into the category of those who misunderstand art as a civics lesson charged with not misbehaving in front of mythical children, except that his witness to sacrifice is at a personal level outside virtually any one else's in the country.

"Wedding's" true root is the civil rights films of the 1950s and 1960s. It's the grandchild of that genre, and it reflects the way contemporary American film flips the old norms of social inclusion upside down.

It's understandable then that Rev. Jackson missed something else at work in "Barbershop." As old as "Abie's Irish Rose" or "The Jazz Singer," it's the sad lament for a vanished world that every ethnic subculture voiced in American performance art and literature during the 20th century. It's the very essence of American assimilation that it carries the children off someplace higher and further away to the American dream, where the ethnic or national strife that marked life before has been successfully and gratefully left behind by the immigrant generation. Which is then horrified to realize that when the next generation calls itself American—by which it means indistinguishably middle-class, or maybe rich to the lucky few—everything else about its culture is lost, too.

That this out-migration eluded black Americans until the past 30 years is unquestionable; now blacks face the dilemma of America's other second-generation immigrants. With Spike Lee and the rise of the new black film—unlike the integrationist films of the 1950s and more like the race films of the 1930s-1950s—came the rise, finally, of the black middle class that had something to say to itself first. The "Superfly" films of the 1970s were something between a satire and a mirror image of "Dirty Harry's" anti-bureaucratic frustration with law and disorder, in this case in the 'hood. While the overrated "Shaft" (1971) (the best thing about it was the title song) did the right thing in the 'hood, it remained for Spike Lee more than a decade later to point the way back to the neighborhood. Even if not always successfully, Lee nevertheless reframed the image of the community onscreen, to let it see itself and talk to itself first.

In its way, "Barbershop" is not too different at the end of the day from the repackaging of Yiddishkeit musicals like "Fiddler on the Roof"—the truth glossed over, romanticized, and idealized perhaps, but still managing to elicit a lump in the throat as to what has been lost, or in "Barbershop's" case, in the future view of what's ahead as the black middle class takes over and enters the terrain of Afro-American "Cinema Paradiso." And fighting the same Atlantis-like battle against the inevitable wave of the future past, "Wedding" just wants the white guys to show a little respect—or their applications will be denied. ◆

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Get the big things right

Democrats took a licking in this year's elections, but they ought not let their disappointment turn to despair. They can reclaim the White House in 2004.

As history has shown, big turnarounds can happen quickly. Richard Nixon won the White House four years after Barry Goldwater's 1964 shellacking. Bill Clinton won reelection two years after the Republican landslide in 1994.

But there is plenty of work to be done before an about-face can happen. To win in 2004, Democrats need to recapture the vital center that they have held for the majority of the last decade. They can do that by winning the battle of ideas, seizing the mantle of reform, and restoring their sense of national purpose.

These are big challenges, yes, but all within their grasp. There are five essential but straightforward steps to meeting them:

First, Democrats need to appeal to all Americans, not just to narrow interests. The Democratic message this midterm election was a tired appeal to groups, with little more to offer than prescription drugs and the status quo on Social Security. That message was too easily neutralized by Republicans saying they were against privatization of Social Security and for prescription drugs, too. For all the kvetching on Social Security, Democrats lost the senior vote.

Second, Democrats need to expand their base, not just to energize it. Democrats should, of course, go all out to rally their faithful to the polls, but that can't be the end of their strategy. The base just isn't big enough to win. The harsh reality is that there are more conservatives than liberals in America (and more moderates than either). There are also more independents than Democrats or Republicans, more suburbanites than big city dwellers, more whites than minorities, more nonunion workers than union workers.

That's why, contrary to much of the conventional wisdom following the Democrats' defeat, moving left is counterproductive. Voters already think Democrats are too far left. In a post-election Gallup Poll, 39 percent of all Americans said the Democrats were too liberal, and 54 percent of Democrats said their party needs to moderate its liberal message.

In 2004, Democrats must win the swing voters in the political center. Those voters tend to be white, politically moderate, loosely tied, if at all, to a political party, live in the suburbs, and work in nonunion jobs. Democrats ignore them at their own peril because they can't win without them. Bill Clinton, with his New Democrat message, won overwhelmingly in the cities—and 24 of the 28 largest suburban counties. Democrats today can rally their base and win swing voters, too.

Third, Democrats need to get the big things right. That means national security and the economy. The president's first responsibility is as commander-in-chief. Right now, by huge margins, voters trust Republicans over Democrats on national security and on fighting terrorism. According to Gallup, 57 percent of Americans think that Democrats are not tough enough on terrorism; 64 percent said the Republicans are. Democrats simply can't let that advantage stand. Our nominee in 2004 must convince voters that he'll keep them safe. If he doesn't, nothing else will matter.

President Bush's economic record leaves him vulnerable. But, to take advantage of that vulnerability, Democrats need to offer a credible plan for growing the economy. Trimming the tax cut makes sense, but as part of a comprehensive Democratic alternative that includes its own tax cuts and ideas for increasing investment, creating jobs, raising incomes, and expanding opportunity.

Once the Democrats earn voter confidence on national security and the economy, voters will listen to all the other good things they have to say.

Fourth, Democrats need to offer bold, innovative reforms, not incremental change. A bold tax overhaul would be a start. And there are plenty of other big challenges in search of big ideas: the aging of America and the baby-boom retirement; exploding health costs, insuring the uninsured, and providing long-term care; balancing work and family; and achieving energy independence. If Democrats tackle these challenges with approaches President Bush can't co-opt, voters will reward them.

Fifth, Democrats need to look outside Washington for ideas that work. We have a great opportunity to do this with the increased number of Democratic governors.

In Washington, Democratic activists tend to think in terms of interests and constituencies. For practical ideas that work, Democrats ought to look to those leaders who live outside of Washington and are held accountable for what they do. Americans don't want a party that speaks for organized interest groups. They want a party that tackles problems with practical solutions, and speaks with a clear sense of national purpose.

In 2004, Democrats can be that party. If they are, they'll recapture the vital center and Americans will once again turn to them for national leadership. ◆

Al From is founder and CEO of the Democratic Leadership Council. A version of this column was originally published in *The Wall Street Journal.*

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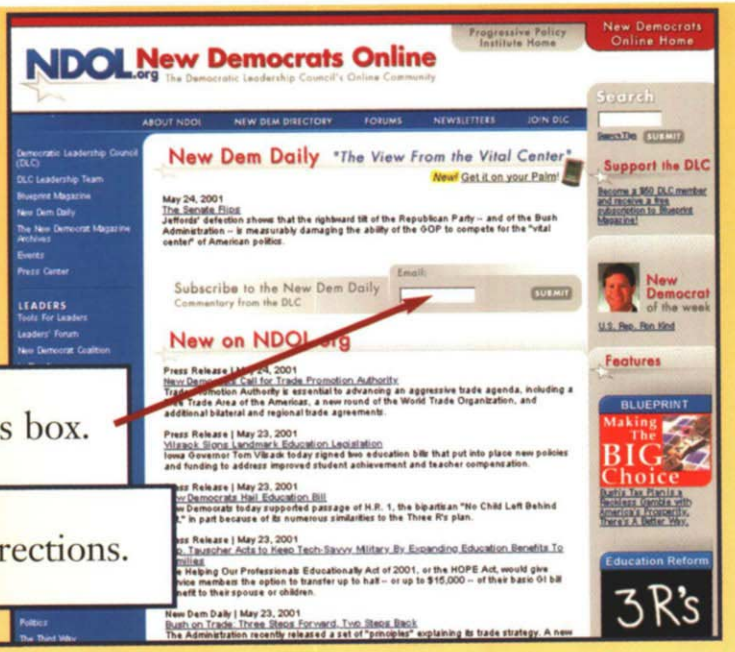

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